

DUC ROLLON

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CHAPTER I

THE opening of Parliament in the Capitol of Washington in the year 2000 was marked by exceptional brilliancy. Not only did it synchronize with the beginning of the Twenty-first Century, but it also celebrated the fiftieth anniversary (proclaimed May 1) of the Columbian Empire, which had succeeded without serious disturbances at home, and, one might say, by natural evolution, the Great Republic, forgotten with extraordinary quickness long ago; in fact, the cataclysms which had convulsed the opposite side of the globe had been quite enough to absorb general attention.

Long before the official hour some hundreds of automobiles, emblazoned with coats-of-arms, arrived, bringing ladies in full dress, Deputies and Senators in brilliant uniforms, and leaving them at the colossal steps leading to the

Rotunda. This enormous cage, with a diameter of one hundred feet, and more than double that in height, seemed inadequate to hold the flock of twittering, animated birds, preening and exhibiting their plumage, whilst the more hurried spectators crowded the staircase to the Galleries.

The stream of pedestrians came by the innumerable steps leading from the Botanical Gardens to the western façade of the Capitol, which extended over the marble terrace overlooking the Mall and the Potomac River. For the moment, however, all eyes were turned from this fine view to watch the appearance on Pennsylvania Avenue of the Imperial Cortège. In the interior of the Rotunda, reserved for the invited guests of the Official world, could be remarked important men and women—these latter noted either for their beauty or for the titles of their husbands; and the marble or bronze eyes of the statues of Washington, Lafayette, or other founders of the Independence might have beheld, not only some Duchesses and Marquises, but shortly a more surprising sight—an Emperor.

The centre of a circle was a young girl, the perfection of whose strong features and

èlegance of form alone would have attracted attention. These exterior advantages were not, however, the true reason of her renown.

“Look!” said someone; “that is the famous Edith Wagstaff, niece of the Premier, one of the twelve women elected to the Chamber, and the leader of her party. She is already well known for her eloquence.”

“What an extraordinary idea to come here in a tailor-made gown!” said a Lady-in-Waiting, with a shrug of her shoulders, who, although not on duty, was wearing a Court dress and some yards of pearls. “It is pure affectation, and in very bad taste.”

The remark provoked this reply:

“Among the feminine Deputies, who have not as yet received a uniform, simple dressing is adopted, which, according to my idea, shows intelligence. But, belonging as they do to the Opposition, the Palace never miss an opportunity of criticizing them.”

“It is not quite natural,” said the lady of the pearls, “to see the Premier’s niece figuring on the Opposition side.”

“I grant she may seem a little *avancée*, but then her father, Henry Wagstaff, counter-balances it, for he is a confirmed reactionist, and at heart he mourns the Republic.”

"Perhaps at the bottom of his heart he does mourn it, but he is not a very dangerous reactionist, for he seldom leaves the writing-table of his library."

"Oh yes, he does, on certain occasions," someone exclaimed, "for there he is now; he has just joined his daughter."

"I wonder why he doesn't wear the Institute uniform and decorations like all of his *confrères*?"

"Because he is a reactionist, and consistent—a decidedly rare quality. . . . But the ushers are clearing the Rotunda. His Majesty is arriving."

The crowd obediently retreated to the semi-circular Statuary Hall, then to the corridor leading to the Chamber of Deputies. The two thousand five hundred seats of the Galleries were soon filled. A special place, just facing the throne, was reserved for the Senators. In passing before Washington's statue, by Houdon (a copy of the one in the old Virginian Parliament), Henry Wagstaff stopped a second, and, raising his eyes to the noble face, he might have been heard to murmur: "Poor George!"

In the meanwhile, a pompous procession was seen wending its way up Pennsylvania Avenue

and approaching the Capitol to the main portal. A Frenchman, awakening after a sleep of one hundred and fifty years, might have fancied himself watching Napoleon III. leaving the Tuileries on his way to open Parliament in the "Galerie d'Apollon."

However, some important innovations would have puzzled this bicentenarian. He would have looked in vain for the *attelages à la Daumont*, which were replaced by shining automobiles. For that matter, horse-drawn carriages, at this time some eccentric millionaire's caprice, could be seen only on rare occasions from one end of the Empire to the other. The most noble conquest of man, according to Buffon, served chiefly as food for the people. The cavalry, since the suppression of the Army, had disappeared.

The Imperial automobile was escorted by a hundred or so of mounted police, the sole but necessary vestige left of the dragoons of yore. Although international treaties had brought about a general disarmament, they had not been able to effect a miracle—that of suppressing crime on the face of earth.

The total destruction of their navy, and the loss of the States on the slope of the Rocky

Mountains bordering the Pacific, had been a hard blow for those who, during the best part of two centuries, had proudly called themselves "Americans," as if all America had belonged to them. With their practical sense, avoiding home discussions, they had realized their mistake. After the disappearance of Europe from the political map, Japan, having attained her aim, had forcibly inscribed a general disarmament on the universal chart of nations.

"The war of the three stories"—the submarines, the fleets and armies, and the aeroplanes—as the historian, Henry Wagstaff, termed it, had just terrified the two continents by its results, which no longer merited the name of victory, but that of annihilation.

The first Sovereign of the Columbian Empire (which, under its new name, had been raised on the remains of the United States) had been one of those men equally well gifted for war as for administration, of whom Washington, and, long after him, Lincoln, were illustrious examples. But these were sleeping their last sleep, wrapped in their winding-sheets of success, while the new Emperor, Theodore I., was trying to find his way out of defeat. Nevertheless, his Testament, referring to

politics, contained the following lines, which showed the breadth of his ideas as well as the serenity of his soul :

“ My son, I bequeath to you an easier task than fell to my lot. Our people, still great and strong, have grown wise in beholding the mortal folly of others. They longed for Imperial splendour, with all its ostentation and accessories. Grant them their desire, but keep intact, as far as possible, the fundamental principles of the old government with its traditions. Govern by liberty and good sense, never forget the giants of our Independence, and never allow them to be forgotten. We are very small as compared with them.”

On seeing Theodore II., in gold embroidery and plumes, seated on a throne between the portraits of Washington and Lafayette, nobody could have accused him of neglecting to show due consideration for the paternal advice. No false pride might be traced on the intelligent and honest face from which youth had already disappeared, but which was frequently softened by the flash of national humour. If anything in this ceremony had some amusement for him it was, to quote a famous answer to Louis XIV.,

"To see himself there!" Without exaggerated attention he listened to the flattering speech of welcome addressed by the President of the Chamber. Then he, in his turn, rose to reply, and from his very first words it could be discerned that he was more of a thinker than a politician. It was none the less noticeable, however, that, if he were extremely modest about himself, he was enthusiastically proud of his epoch and of his country. After a brief but eloquent greeting to the new-born Century, the Sovereign dwelt with more complacency on the progress made in the last era. At the same time he declared that he did not intend to dwell on its sadness.

"Let us consider only," he said, "what we have received and what given to Civilization. This country, like a generous benefactor, finds everywhere subjects of gratitude, even amongst those who were our enemies. It is, thanks to us mostly, that the Twentieth Century will remain the most marvellous in the history of the world since its creation. To-day one asks in astonishment how it was possible to live when it required horses to draw carriages, when it was necessary to use wires to communicate from one house to another, to burn

mountains of coal to put trains and steamers in motion, to reduce to pulp entire forests for producing the paper for our books.

"The Electric wave of the wireless seems to be generated as easily as the thought which it carries. An aeroplane crosses the ocean with a few hundred pounds of solidified oxygen. Finally, one of our young savants discovered recently the economical fabrication of aluminium paper, twice as light as the other, and indestructible by air or insects."

- An applause interrupted the Imperial discourse, and all eyes were turned towards the Gallery, where a man scarcely thirty years of age was seated. His cold, unemotional face showed that he endured, rather than enjoyed, this ovation.

Theodore waited quietly until it had finished, then resumed his discourse :

"The war taxes have been suppressed with the abolishment of the Army and Navy. Nearly all so-called incurable diseases we have been able to prevent from crossing the threshold of the Twenty-first Century. I ask, will our grandchildren find something to do for the advancement of Civilization ?"

The Sovereign ended by congratulating him-

self (according to usage) on their friendly relations with other Powers, and in pointing out to the Deputies a summary statement of the work they had to do. The speech finished in a burst of applause, which left no doubt as to the Monarch's popularity.

"Do you know," asked Henry Wagstaff of his neighbour, "what I most admired in what our Emperor has said? It is what he did *not* say. Many others in his place would have boasted of the advantages of the present régime whose fiftieth anniversary we are celebrating. True, he did not speak much more of George Washington, but we cannot exact that the second husband of a woman extols the virtues of the first."

Someone, whilst following the crowd in descending the staircase, replied:

"In fact, the triumphant man of the day has been Warren Islington, your young colleague of the Institute, with his aluminium paper."

"Warren is my great friend. Two things have immensely pleased me just now—namely, to see that justice has been done to him, and to realize that success has not turned his head."

Lavinia Cornell, the unmarried sister of

Henry Wagstaff's deceased wife, who had joined her brother-in-law, emphasized the praise, only to end by criticism.

"Oh, nothing turns his head. He might serve as the model of the young man of to-day, incapable of emotion in the presence of art, poetry, or love."

"My dear," retorted the old historian, "the Emperor has just given us an example of admiration as we must practise it. The direct captation of electricity from the atmosphere, paper made from aluminium, the solidification of oxygen, the hope of living to a hundred years—are these compensations not enough to reconcile you with the new Century?"

"I should be very sorry to live to be a hundred myself. Science has caused us to be overrun with old people who defy nature, and refuse to be buried under the pretext that the doctors have not given them their death certificate. What good are they except to fill the old barracks which have been turned into asylums for the aged and impotent?"

Edith Wagstaff rejoined her aunt. She heard these last words, and added:

"True, we have not been able to suppress the effects of age, but we have suppressed

pauperism, which was the leprosy of the old social system. Who could believe that there was a time when a beggar stood in the street with outstretched hands to beg in order not to die of starvation or cold? Do you regret them, dear auntie?"

"Well, my dear, I don't know exactly what to answer. I saw the last of them, and even at the risk of seeming an egoist, I admit that it was a sweet joy to open my childish purse for them when I could. But I bless the Lord, who permits human suffering to diminish. The law of love was better perhaps than the law of national assistance."

The ebbing tide of the crowd was returning to the Rotunda, where the Emperor, ready to leave, was receiving the salutations of the Diplomatic Corps, greatly reduced in number, as the Occidental Powers of Europe were no longer in existence to maintain ambassadors abroad. Theodore II. was showing marked attention to the Plenipotentiary of Japan, formerly a small Empire, but which at this time had come to the front by its prestige and wealth. Beside him was noticed the tall form and white hair of Elzear Turcote, who was representing the Republic of Canada, the neigh-

hour of the North. He seemed less interested in the official pomp than in his talk with Geoffrey Wagstaff, the Premier, noted as one of the finest wits in Washington. Both had been cadets in their young days, one in the "American" army (as it was then called), the other in the allied troops of Canada. They had fought side by side on the same battlefields during the Japanese invasion. At seventy they were the same good friends as they had been at eighteen.

When off duty, their conversation was a curious mixture of deep thought and picturesque humour. One had preserved the supple, caustic mind of the old French, the other was showing the indomitable energy and piercing glance displayed by the noted money-makers of a preceding period. Faithful in their friendship, these two men were at odds on many questions. If put face to face on the official and diplomatic ground, each of them, and they knew it, would become a skilled fencer, doing his utmost to bluff his adversary. To sum up, this they also knew, Geoffrey Wagstaff and Elzéar Turcote were worthy antagonists. In fact, as they were living mostly at peace, the present political conditions afforded

few risks of friction between their Governments.

"Well," said the Canadian in a loud voice, "that was a very imposing ceremony. His Majesty's discourse was an oration of the first order."

Elzear Turcote knew perfectly well that his friend had taken no small part as collaborator in that oratorical production; an almost imperceptible wink betrayed it. Imperturbably the Premier replied:

"You are a good judge. I will tell the Emperor of your appreciation. He will be pleased." Lowering his voice, Geoffrey Wagstaff continued: "When you have taken off your regalia, come and dine with us quite informally, you clever dog."

"Our uniforms are a trifle heavy, are they not? How far we are from the shirt-sleeved diplomats of Roosevelt and Taft!"

Just at this moment Theodore II. entered his automobile amid the cries of "Long live the Emperor!" Elzear Turcote joined in, as it was proper he should do, and, shaking the Premier's hand, he added *sotto voce* by the way of concluding:

"I am sure that they shouted just as loudly

‘Long live the President!’ beneath this same dome, after the Elections in your ancient Republic.”

“Probably,” replied Geoffrey Wagstaff, “but these are not the same ones who shouted. As the Republicans are sleeping in the cemetery, that deprives you of the right of calling our citizens changeable.” .

CHAPTER II

THE dinner at Geoffrey Wagstaff's was an intimate one. A widower like his brother, but without children, he had delegated the duties of hostess to "Aunt Lavinia," as she was familiarly called even by those unrelated to her. The other guests were the brother of the Premier, Henry Wagstaff; the celebrated explorer, Douglas Grant; Warren Islington, and Elzear Turcote. Edith's place remained temporarily vacant.

"What, your daughter is not here?" some one asked of Henry Wagstaff, pointing to the unoccupied chair.

"No, she has just telephoned that her 'group' was sitting. You know that to-morrow the address in answer to the speech from the Throne will be discussed, and the question is, "Shall they side with the Opposition or with the Majority?"

Under a less official form, the Imperial

oration was at once commented upon by those round the table.

"In fact," declared Elzear Turcote, "you have put in the Emperor's mouth the most appropriate words that he could utter in the year 2000, and you have wound up by a grandiloquent phrase, in which, by the way, there is nothing binding: 'Will our grandchildren find something to do for the advancement of Civilization?'"

"Yes," said the historian, "they will have to prevent it disappearing from our country as it did elsewhere, and so quickly, too. Our friend Douglas Grant, one of the few who have lately travelled in Europe, will tell you that in her present condition she is the picture of Upper Egypt in the epoch of George Washington. Seen from afar the past civilization of a period reminds me of a rocket, which, after mounting to the sky, sinks to the ground. Following my idea, let me say that the world since its creation has beheld several pyrotechnic displays of that kind. Where are they now? Ask the explorers who take so much trouble to find the skeletons decaying in the sands. We are proud of our civilization because it has lasted for two thousand years.

Twenty centuries, a mere Bengal fire as compared with the quasi-eternal duration of the universe!"

"Your comparison is not quite just," replied the Columbian statesman. "After the final burst of fireworks, the spectators on going to bed have not forgotten the errors of the day before. On the contrary, our people, as you have just remarked, are still shivering from the memory of recent cataclysms. Consequently they have become so wise that the task of the ruler is easier than it ever has been. No more wars, no more rebellions, no more strikes, no more social hatreds, no more pauperism—the last is a progress of which your daughter is so proud. As for Aunt Lavinia, she is bemoaning the absence of beggars."

"The Golden Age, in a word," said Elzear Turcote, with obvious sarcasm.

"No," corrected Henry Wagstaff, "it is not the Golden Age, it is only a lull permitting the crew to take breath. Gales will return unless we suppress the wind. I mean human passions, they are still menacing the world."

"You a pessimist?" exclaimed his brother.

"I am a historian. Past events may recur. What envy, ambition, thirst for equality have

done in Europe, they may do again in any human community. With what an appalling regularity one can detect the succession of disasters on the other side of the Atlantic! A stupid Socialism destroyed Capital by progressive taxation, unaware of the fact that no capital means no revenue. At the same time, strikers were destroying industry, unaware that no industry means no wages. A time came when the State creditors could not get their incomes, which was a pretext for the military intervention of other Powers. Bloody defeats followed, better deserving the name of extermination. In those days one hour sufficed to kill one hundred thousand men, or to raze a big city to the ground. Then, as is always the case, citizens fought each other by the scientific processes that modern discoveries have put into the hands of villains. The last stage was sure to follow: famine, epidemics, such as were known in the Middle Ages, in a country deprived of doctors, railroads, telegraphs. Let it be added that the race itself was doomed, and already reduced to one-half by the constant decrease of births. Infants had preceded their mothers to the grave whose dried-up breasts were unable to suckle them!

Alas ! when I speak of graves, it is a mere figure of speech : human bones are whitening on the plains of old France. . . .”

“If you don’t change the conversation, I shall leave the table,” lamented Aunt Lavinia, whose eyes were full of tears.

“A rather gruesome picture,” admitted Geoffrey Wagstaff, “but I wish it could be placarded on the wall of every house in Columbia. So long as it remains in our memory, we shall be wise.”

“Some causes of the European cataclysm were not human,” observed the explorer. “One might say that Nature did not wish to be left behind in the general work of destruction. Earthquakes, floods, recalling to mind the Cyclopean period, completed the havoc. That is why, since my visit to the ruins, I have brought back some scepticism regarding Science. It seems to me like a lot of school-boys at play, who take to their heels when lightning strikes the tree over their heads.”

As might be expected, Warren Islington protested :

“Do not forget that you are the compatriots of Franklin : ‘*Eripuit coelo fulmen . . .*’”

“‘ . . . *sceptrumque tyrannis,*’” completed .

Edith Wagstaff as she took her place at table, after having won the admiration of her "group" for her wealth of erudition and her power of eloquence.

"Humph!" exclaimed Elzear Turcote, "I think it would be more advisable to stop your quotation at 'fulmen.' As for 'tyrannis,' what would you call this personage whom the crowd was cheering so vociferously a moment ago?"

"Theodore II. is not a tyrant. Public liberty has never been better protected. My father will tell you that Roosevelt, compared with the present Sovereign, was a detestable autocrat."

"Positively, nations as well as individuals need to forget if they want to be happy," affirmed the Canadian diplomat. "You are losing sight of a few trifling deceptions which History has made you experience. Do you still remember the famous Monroe Doctrine forbidding American soil to all foreign interference? What do you see now? Your last Presidents believed that, owing to the Arbitration Court of The Hague, a stronger army was not necessary in your country. Japan, on the contrary, was constantly augmenting her military power. For that reason she is thriving

on the other side of the Rockies. I have heard it said that your ancestors caused two hundred thousand men to be killed in order to free the negroes from slavery. Since we are talking behind closed doors, would you be able to swear that some of the grandchildren of poor, dear old Uncle Tom are not regretting slavery?"

A unanimous burst of indignation greeted these words.

"Well," continued Elzear Turcote quite unmoved, "you refuse to forget. Why not admit the evidence? In the vertiginous course of progress the black race, inadequately endowed by nature, has not been able to keep pace with the white race. It has been left behind to be trampled under the white man's foot after a fierce struggle, which perhaps made you, too, feel some regrets. Your soldiers and your sailors once more civilians, reinforced by millions of European refugees, have laid their hands upon any job worth having. But above all, as Universal Suffrage disappeared with the Republic, your politicians did not need the votes of coloured men, which meant immediate starvation for many of the latter."

"We have transported to Africa all negroes

anxious to go home," observed Geoffrey Wagstaff.

"Yes, and still more, you gave them free passage on what was left of your fleet. And it took more than one trip to clear the docks. And what are they doing now, your 'brethren,' ransomed at Gettysburg and other places? Are you sure, I ask again, that they do not regret the plantations, where at least they were sure of not starving? To sum up, what can you show as the result of your Homeric battles of the Nineteenth Century? A list of pensions which are still being paid to the grandsons, granddaughters, nephews, nieces, etc., of the dead heroes."

"But you Canadians," retorted Edith, already a skilled debater, "is not your memory a little short? Yesterday Monarchists, to-day Republicans!"

"What! and is it you, the daughter of a great historian, who accuses us of not remembering the past? Don't you know that, after Louis XV., the King of France, left Canada to her fate, the British themselves extolled our loyalty for a century and a half? And we continued loyal until the day when our ill-advised Suzerain attempted to suppress our native

language. Then we became a Republic. At least, we have kept our '*doux parler*.' What language do you speak, you Columbians? A corrupt English mixed with German that could not be understood in either Berlin or London, supposing those cities were still in existence. Side with me, Miss Cornell, you who are the collateral descendant of the author of '*Cid*.'"

The cleverness of the great diplomat was seen in this apostrophe, for everyone knew that Aunt Lavinia pretended that her patronymic name had been changed from that of Corneille. She bowed her head as though saluting his august shadow, and replied :

"I am proud to say that in this country there is not a really cultured man or woman who does not speak French. What difference does it make where the flame of Civilization burns provided it is not extinguished? America in her turn has become the altar for the sacred fire. For a century, as though foreseeing the future, we have given refuge to the works of Art of the Old World, and how spiteful they have been to us because of it! The National Library of Washington contains more volumes than any other one has done in the course of ages."

An invulnerable critic on everything that concerned Columbia, Elzear Turcote made the following remark :

"Quite true, but pretty soon you will run short of trees to make pulp, and still worse, pulp paper does not last. Your librarians are vainly trying to hide the fact that fifty thousand volumes have crumbled into dust on their shelves. And your cabinet-makers some day will find a lack of wood for their work."

"A steel armchair is better than a wooden one," rejoined Warren Islington, "and my aluminium paper cannot be eaten by worms."

"Besides," added Edith Wagstaff, "our feminist 'group' is aiming at the creation of National Parks where trees shall be preserved. Already the laws are exacting a smaller size and fewer pages for the newspapers."

Turcote was not a man to be easily squashed, so he continued :

"Forests grow again. But you are in danger of running short of coal and iron-ore. Have the ladies in Parliament found a remedy against such a serious disaster ?"

Douglas Grant took up the cudgels. Not being loquacious by nature, when he did speak, he was invariably listened to.

“The fact that we are lacking iron is distressing even for the most obtuse mind. A man who can think more or less cannot fail to compare the penury, which is at our door, with the fabulous wealth of metallic stock left decaying on the soil of European countries. It is only a question of bringing it from there.”

Henry Wagstaff interposed :

“If you read in our old chronicles the reports of the inter-ocean canal, you will see there this little paragraph which deprives you of the priority of your thought: ‘The American vessels leaving our ports with cargoes of cement for constructing the dams, used to return home ballasted with old iron left in the Isthmus by our less fortunate predecessors of the Lesseps period. This was all transformed into new material under the steam-hammer.’”

“Quite true, Professor, but you are speaking of an insignificant residuum, if one compares it with the supply, surpassing all imagination, scattered over the surface of Europe. Let us mention France alone. I estimate that there are more than three hundred thousand miles of rust-eaten rails between the Alps and the Atlantic. My friend Warren will calculate in

five minutes how many billion tons of iron-ore the blast furnaces had to employ in order to produce them. But without going so far, I have counted, in Normandy alone, several scores of iron bridges obstructing the course of the rivers which they had overspanned in olden times. I think I could see in that a more lucrative use for our old fleet than transporting negroes back to Africa."

The auditors listened in rapt attention with the exception of Elzear Turcote, who, shrugging his shoulder slightly, and allowing himself the unceremonious freedom permitted to his age, said :

"Young man, you are telling us fairy-tales. Now, ladies, your most obedient servant begs to take his leave. Quebec must have my report on to-day's event. Fortunately, I shall not have to relate the wit and charm of the fair enchantresses. A whole night would not be sufficient to write my impressions."

• "My dear Ambassador," said Geoffrey Wagstaff, "you have the courteousness of old France. But, I fear lest the conversation has seemed to you a little dull. At least, it finished in a more ludicrous vein owing to the extravagant imagination of our young explorer. Shall

we see you to-morrow at the debate on the address ?”

“Of course, I shall be there. Good-night, my dear Premier.”

The other guests left in their turn, but the host detained Warren Islington and Douglas Grant for a few minutes. When the doors were closed he attacked the latter, showing by the expression of his face that he was no longer joking.

“Man, you have talked too much. It is all very fine to conceive ideas. It is dangerous to give utterance to them in the presence of certain listeners. Elzear Turcote has fine ears and the nose of a fox which scents the fowls from afar. Not another word about the old iron of Europe, as you call it. Let us only hope that you have not said too much.”

“You have heard the Ambassador call me an imbecile in more polite terms.”

“Yes, I heard it, but I was watching him. A diplomat should never shave his upper lip. His twitched while you were speaking of three hundred thousand miles of rails.”

“It was extravagant imagination, according to you ; a stupid fairy-tale, according to him.”

“We shall see ; at all events, spend the

night, if you must, in studying these stupid fairy-tales and converting them into a serious written proposition. Most likely the Emperor will wish to speak to you about it to-morrow."

"The Emperor?"

"I maintain what I say. Go to work, and don't trust Elzear Turcote. He is quite capable of having you shadowed."

"Oh, Excellency, how you judge your friend!"

"Yes, young man, he is my friend and I am his, and I cannot blame him for prying into my game, since—— But my detectives are better than his, and that gives me the advantage."

Early the following morning one of those prowlers whom one does not care to meet in a deserted lane after midnight entered the Premier's cabinet without being kept waiting in the ante-chamber.

"I made a point of doing the job myself," he said without useless preamble, for he was one of the prominent men of the Secret Service. "The Canadian left before daybreak in a northerly direction by aeroplane."

"That means he is now in Quebec or near-
ing it. Why didn't you inform me sooner?"

“The butler of the Canadian Embassy, my friend, cannot go out during the night. Alas! we are no longer living in a time when it is possible for even the most unimportant person to depart, arrive, or travel, without having a whole city aware of it. Ah, Excellency, what a damned invention is the aeroplane!”

“Unfortunately, it is used for other purposes than conjuring away diplomats. It serves to destroy fleets. And now, good-bye. I will send a marconigram to Québec.—Devil take these young chatter-boxes!” he said to himself.

CHAPTER III

IN accordance with the paternal advice to respect old souvenirs, Theodore II. had decided that the Imperial Palace should retain the name of "White House"; but, to tell the truth, the name alone existed. John Adams, the second President, would not have been able to recognize the residence glorying in its own modesty, which he had occupied only a few months before his death. The entrance on Lafayette Square had been kept, but the new palace had annexed the buildings of the War and Navy Departments, which were no longer needed. The time had gone by when citizens entered the Executive Mansion with the freedom they did their own homes. The door at this hour was guarded by two mounted gendarmes whose imposing sentry-boxes recalled those of the ancient Tuileries, or of the old Buckingham Palace in days of yore. The Park of one

hundred and twenty acres, more beautiful than ever, was no longer opened to the public.

In the same way that the contemporary milliardaires of Vanderbilt and Gould displayed their pride in the jewels of their wives, so the Columbians at the end of the Twentieth Century took pleasure in the pomp and luxury of their Sovereign. Theodore II. had realized it, and had resigned rather than habituated himself to this splendour. In compliance with the orders received, "To govern by liberty and good sense," he gave the example of a simple and practical sagacity, of which his smallest acts were the demonstration. Whilst formerly the rôle of a Sovereign exacted an overwhelming amount of work, he had little to do, since the questions of war and peace in the world no longer existed to occupy the minds of statesmen. To be perfectly frank, he was simply bored to death.

Theodore II. had married a descendant of the Imperial House, which for such a long and glorious period had presided over the destinies of Germany. The Empress, whose parents had fled from their country at the time of the bloody triumph of Socialism, had always preserved a veil of melancholy on her plain face.

Consequently, and with only too good an excuse, she was not the best fitted hostess to enliven the receptions which it was her duty to hold. It must be added that, imbued with the prejudices of her race, she had never succeeded in taking seriously the brand-new coats-of-arms of her Ladies-in-Waiting, who, on their side, might have given the odds in matter of haughtiness to the Archduchesses of ancient Europe.

The Emperor's most diverting pleasure (shall we say, by an effect of atavism) was to manage his own private affairs, proving himself, in the opinion of very good judges, as the shrewdest man of business in his Empire.

No wonder if he listened with both ears open when Geoffrey Wagstaff hastened to disclose "the idea" of the famous explorer.

"One hundred million tons of iron!" he exclaimed; "with the impoverishment of our mines, that represents a good many tons of gold. Do not lose time in bringing this young man to me, whom I have never found so interesting before."

The Premier, having confessed the blunder which had been committed and the possible competition which might result from it, the

attention of the "business man" was doubled by the excitement of a match to which was added the prospect of a gain.

"Well, it is not soon, but at once, that I must see Douglas Grant."

"I anticipated Your Majesty's wish. He has received my orders. With the assistance of Warren Islington, the most competent man in such matters, I have instructed him to draw up a statement which he will have the honour of submitting to you."•

A few hours later they were summoned and duly cautioned over the telephone. They presented themselves separately by different entrances, making sure that they were not shadowed. Theodore II., attended by Geoffrey Wagstaff, received them at once.

Douglas Grant began by repeating what he had said, too precipitately, the evening before at the dinner-table. Warren Islington then named some figures of profits which increased the interest of his august listener. The project elaborated included a survey trip in Normandy, the best chosen place to start the enterprise which should be conducted more or less actively, according to the information acquired on the spot.

"Why Normandy—England is much nearer to us?" asked the Emperor.

"Unquestionably, Sire; but England is unapproachable. A mission would never return alive. At the time of the last Revolution, the working class with hardly any peasantry formed the population of the British Isles, and the crisis there was more dreadful than in any other country. We should need an armed escort."

"Don't think of it," interrupted Geoffrey Wagstaff; "by a treaty with Japan and Canada, our dangerous neighbours, all military intrusions are disclaimed. The first step taken in that direction would result in a strife, and most likely in great wars. Without looking so far, I suppose that Your Majesty would prefer the matter to remain of private and not public order. The presence of only one of our mounted police would give it quite another aspect."

The advantage of a "private affair," as the Premier foresaw, seemed to impress Theodore.

"All right," said he, "but is Normandy really more accessible?"

"Yes, Sire. I visited it four years ago. I discovered there a curious embryo of organized

life, a vague and shapeless copy of the primary social system. This country has a chief, a very old man who has come into power neither by conquest nor election, but merely by his bravery at the time of the cataclysm. Terrified and reduced to a small number, the survivors rallied round him, as the crew of a sunken vessel rally round the captain on a deserted island. One of his brother officers, some sixty years ago, called him, in joke, 'Duc Rollon,'—a name which, as our learned historian, Henry Wagstaff, would tell you, belonged to the first ruler of Normandy in the tenth century. To-day his retinue call him so, and are as obedient to him as to a confirmed autocrat. You see there probably a repetition of the *processus* from which the first Emperors issued. This Duc Rollon is perhaps the most curious personage existing to-day on the face of the globe."

"I remember having read all that in your reports. It seems to me that you even became good friends with him?"

"Yes, after having been his prisoner. I was able to convince him that I was not an emissary of a greedy Emperor. The terror of an invasion is his *idée fixe* to which must be

added one other: his unforgettable resentment against civilization, which he holds responsible for all the evils to his people."

"What do you expect from him then?"

"That he will give me permission of ridding him of his old iron, as his Excellency's brother called it when speaking of the residuum of Panama."

"And you anticipate a success?"

"That is not sure, but it costs nothing to try, while avoiding everything which might alarm Duc Rollon. The hardest part will be to point out to him his interests, and to allay his fears."

"There is something else," said Geoffrey Wagstaff—"it is a question of getting ahead of the Canadians, if they are to be our competitors."

Douglas Grant replied: "This double result may, I trust, be attained by a single stroke."

"Have you a scheme in view?" asked the Emperor.

"Yes, Sire, but it is so strange that I hesitate to submit it to the eyes of Your Majesty, for it includes feminine co-operation."

"You will take some women with you?" asked Geoffrey Wagstaff.

"I would like to take two, Excellency—your niece Edith and her aunt, Miss Cornell—with their permission."

"He has gone mad!" declared the Premier, shrugging his shoulders; "perhaps my niece might consent, but Lavinia! . . ."

"Who knows? They will have the respectable companionship of your brother, who, for the sake of study, would be quite willing to go."

Speechless, Geoffrey Wagstaff made a gesture of astonishment, but the Emperor remained calm, and with a sign nodded to Douglas Grant to continue.

"To begin with," stated the intrepid explorer, "his Excellency must lend me his yacht. When I crossed four years ago, it was by aeroplane. The ladies, no doubt, would prefer a more comfortable means of transport. We will bluff the newspapers by saying that we are off for a pleasure trip along the coast. Once out to sea the captain would receive orders to head for the East. First result: Elzear Turcote outwitted."

"Hum!" said the Premier, tossing his head.

"Do not interrupt," said Theodore; "continue, young man."

"Sire, I obey. Once arrived on the coast

of Normandy, I would leave all on board and proceed alone to Duc Rollon's domains, some twenty miles inland. I would beg his hospitality for the two ladies and the head of the family, who are making a pleasure excursion. No doubt he will consent. Not a sailor shall land. We will be unarmed. Who could suspect us of being invaders?"

"That is very well—but if something should happen to these defenceless women?"

"If Duc Rollon opens his doors to them, they will be safer in his house than in the streets of Washington. Anything that Your Majesty may have read about the gallantry and chivalry of the knights of ancient times can be applied to this old Norman chief. Besides, everything one sees or hears from him carries one back to the Middle Ages, with its noble sentiments; but alas, too, with its miseries. All other interests apart, it is the best chosen visit to incite the intelligence and inspire meditation in a man."

• "Very good," said the Emperor, "you and your companions have arrived at your Duc's. But who knows if he will permit his old iron to be taken away? Won't he make use of it himself some day?"

“Not very soon, although in the course of events the resurrection of Europe is bound to come. In the meantime, the rust is doing its destructive work ; added to which Duc Rollon cannot need iron : whilst forests are disappearing from Columbia, they are growing unmolested on the soil of Europe. Where there is no industry, wood is a sufficient material for any purpose. At all events, I cannot draw up a precise plan at a distance. I hope by some means Duc Rollon will be coaxed into handing over his metallic wealth to us, by exclusive concession.”

“Quite true ; but that might lead to establishing a Colonial Settlement.”

“Pardon me, Sire : my first care will be to swear on my honour to Duc Rollon that I come with no idea of colonization from Your Majesty. Moreover, that would require a small army. These Normans are all hunters at present. It is true that their weapons are antiquated and imperfect, but they are brave men, and the wild state of their country would aid them in making a desperate resistance. I assert positively that it would be impossible for me to undertake a mission that should not be exclusively pacific in its nature.”

"The sitting is over," pronounced the Emperor; "I must reflect. We will soon meet again. Do not forget, gentlemen, that a Statè secret is in your hands."

At this moment a secretary entered, bringing a marconigram which he had just deciphered. It was sent from Quebec by the Columbian Ambassador and contained these simple words:

"I am assured that Elzear Turcote mysteriously arrived during the night, and had a conference with the President. He has just departed, expecting without doubt that his absence from Washington will not be noticed. Perhaps you surmise the motive of the flying visit, surrounded with such mystery."

The Premier shook his finger at the explorer.

"Well, young man, do you believe now that you have talked too much?"

"Yes, Excellency, but you will admit that my idea is not so bad, since it causes a diplomat to travel so far and so fast. In achieving success I hope to obtain my forgiveness."

CHAPTER IV

THE Parliamentary session at Washington having opened on May 1, as has been seen, was closed on the 15th of the same month. The time no longer existed when the debates of a Legislative Assembly lasted three-quarters of a year. The restricted right of vote, without suppressing the Opposition, had put an end to recklessness, and the Deputies, less anxious for an unwholesome popularity, had ceased to devote entire sittings in its pursuit.

At the same time, the biggest sections of the Budget were no longer discussed, since the Army and Navy were things of the past. As for the questions of foreign policy, they were minimized, owing to the "conditions of general convalescence affecting the world," to quote the expression used by Geoffrey Wagstaff in his concluding speech. It was the moment, as usual, for the short spring vacation, for those who could afford to take it, and people

leaving by aeroplanes or on their yachts formed almost the sole topic of conversation. There were to be found some elderly people preferring their old-fashioned automobiles as more comfortable and safer, notwithstanding the improvement in aerial conveyance and the greatly reduced number of accidents in aviation. The *Washington Sun* published on May 16 the following paragraph, among many others of the same kind :

“ His Excellency, Geoffrey Wagstaff, retained by his official duties, has put his yacht *Terrapine* at the disposition of his brother, the eminent historian, whose health, somewhat debilitated, requires a few weeks' rest. The Honorable Henry Wagstaff, accompanied by his daughter, his sister-in-law Miss Cornell, and some friends, will make a quiet cruise along the coasts of Virginia and Florida, without landing unless to provision. Everybody knows that the *Terrapine* is the most beautiful and best-fitted of our yachts, with the exception of the Imperial one. A pleasant holiday to the distinguished excursionists !”

Two days later, this pleasure-boat of vast dimensions left the old Arsenal quay and sailed down the Potomac, commanded by the naval

engineer, Eugene Murphey. Abundantly manned, she had aboard, besides the persons mentioned, two friends of Henry Wagstaff, whose names can be easily guessed. It may be seen that the mysterious meeting held in the Emperor's cabinet a fortnight before was bearing fruit. The doctor of the celebrated member of the Institute accompanied his "debilitated" patient, who, by the way, never looked better.

The interior accommodations of the *Terrapine* resembled very little those ancient passenger steamers—half-filled with coal when it was a question of a somewhat prolonged voyage. She was set in motion by electricity, which she drew directly from the atmosphere by newly-discovered processes. Her fuel was solidified oxygen, of which a few cubic meters might enable her to go round the world without calling at a port. Cumbersome boilers and smoky firemen were discarded. Like all the pleasure-crafts of a luxurious style now afloat, she had the passenger part ingeniously suspended inside the hull and quite independent of its motion, so no more effects of rolling and pitching could be unpleasantly felt. For several days Douglas Grant had superintended the shipping of a quantity of mysterious boxes,

some of them very heavy. Had they been opened their contents would have caused astonishment to those who believed, according to the newspapers, that the *Terrapine* had set out on a pleasure trip along the coast.

After a farewell luncheon at the Premier's, the passengers sailed gently down the Potomac, giving the impression that they were in a hurry. Towards five o'clock they were beyond Point Lookout and entered the broad and spacious Chesapeake Bay. They reached Cape Charles just in time to see the first flash from the lighthouse, and came into the open sea, heading towards South-South-West. But before midnight, after the ladies had retired to their cabins, Douglas Grant, appointed as the chief of the expedition, mounted the bridge:

"Murphey, the comedy has lasted long enough. Alter the course, old fellow. We are bound for Normandy. So push your turbines to their full speed."

The engineer remained impassible, but a wink of the eye and a twitch of the face, for a man of his phlegmatic temperament, was equal to a violent exclamation.

"Very good," he grumbled, "only we must return to Washington."

"Great Scott! what for?"

"To take the charts which we shall need. I should have been warned sooner. I understood it was only a matter of coasting."

"Don't worry," said Douglas Grant, "we don't need to go back. I have a box filled with charts on board, that I pilfered during the night from the Navy Department. You will know to-morrow why we have trusted nobody, *not even* the newspapers, with our secret. When it is daylight, have an eye on the horizon, and make sure that no vessel can recognize us. The *Terrapine* has good legs and can keep away from importunate intruders."

"Oh, steamers are not numerous in the East. The time no longer exists when a hundred thousand Americans crossed the ocean to pass the summer in Europe. There are no more palace hotels for them. All the same, rest easy, we will avoid inquisitive eyes."

At the stroke of eight bells the next morning, Douglas Grant again mounted the bridge, and found Murphey smoking his pipe in company with the doctor.

"Wilkins," said he, "as you won't have much to do, at least I hope so, I promote you

to the office of secretary of the expedition, entrusted with the log-book and the marcógrams. Here is one to commence with. I dictate: *20th May, 8 a.m. Sighting Cape Hatteras. Weather fine. All well on board.*"

Taking his pipe out of his mouth, Murphey objected :

"Cape Hatteras ? We have turned our backs on it, and are quite five hundred miles away."

"I expected as much. But the Washington papers which publish this despatch will not come to verify it. Here is another, in *cypher*, for Geoffrey Wagstaff: *Heading Westward, no incident.*"

Murphey gave a grin :

"I don't understand," he said, "but no doubt it is very amusing for those who do understand."

"Old fellow, you shall know soon," promised Douglas Grant.

He went down to the saloon where Henry Wagstaff, his daughter and his sister-in-law were seated round the early breakfast-table. Better informed than Murphey and Wilkins, they understood. Each one of them, for different reasons, had started on this mysterious expedition with enthusiasm. Douglas Grant

knew how to manage when he wished to coax people to his opinion. The eminent historian already anticipated writing a deep and suggestive essay on the "Eclipse of a Civilization." The young scientist reckoned on the material result of an enterprise in which the Emperor had an interest. Edith Wagstaff, always eager for knowledge, expected to learn what Bossuet three hundred years before had termed, "some great and terrible lessons." Finally, younger in mind and heart than the rest of her companions, Aunt Lavinia was plunging with delight into an adventure which surpassed all her past dreams. Was she not going to see, still more to tread, the soil which had given birth to the great Corneille, perhaps find some traces of his cradle? It must be added that in her heart of hearts she was outlining a romance. Were not her niece and two young men to live in close and uninterrupted companionship for several weeks?

"On terra-firma," she reflected, "our sons and daughters marry nowadays without falling in love, almost without having looked at each other, for lack of time. Between the sky and the water, in enforced idleness, the devil will be clever indeed if he prevents one, if not both

of these young men, from discovering that Edith is a beauty !”

Launched forth in this direction, the ardent imagination of Miss Cornell went at full gallop. Speaking with her brother the night before their departure, she had confessed to him her hopes, as well as her fears.

“What will happen should both fall in love with her? Can you imagine these two rivals continually elbowing each other on the deck of the yacht, or facing side by side the numberless adventures of such an expedition as ours is sure to have?”

Henry Wagstaff, of a less romantic turn of mind, replied :

“Admit, my dear sister, that you would be delighted to witness a duel in some glade in the forests of Normandy. What a magnificent opportunity of exciting the combatants by quoting this line of your grand uncle : *Sors vainqueur d'un combat dont Chimène est le prix!*”

Seeing that she was not taken seriously by her brother, Aunt Lavinia felt herself impelled to open the eyes of Chimène herself on the dangers of a love-affair with two Rodrigues. Speaking with her niece in the early morning in their boudoir, she said :

“My dear Edith, guard carefully every glance of your eye. Should your heart be secretly won, don't let it be seen so long as Douglas Grant and Warren Islington travel with us.”

“Now auntie, will you make a bet with me that neither of them could tell you if I am fair or dark? As for my heart—— Ages ago girls used to fall in love, so I am told; but in this present day we have so many other things to occupy us.”

“But precisely, here on the yacht you will have nothing else to do, nor these young men either. Only wait; you will see!”

Respect prevented Edith from making fun of her aunt, and she restrained her laughter. Whilst dressing before her mirror, being less hurried than she was in Washington, she was forced, however, to admit that two young men, with nothing better to do—— Well, it was just as likely that they would fall across an icefield inhabited by white bears. At luncheon she could not prevent herself from studying her neighbours, who treated her in comradeship the same as they would have done in the lobbies of the Chamber of Deputies. The talk was about the trip, and, as it is always the case

at sea, of the probable moment of landing. Douglas Grant reported Murphey's reckoning :

"We are now at the 20th of May. With our speed of forty knots an hour we should pass Cape Lizard on the 23rd, a little after noon, and anchor the same evening off the coast of Normandy."

"How long it seems !" sighed Edith.

"An aeroplane would have required scarcely half the time, but what a difference in the comfort ! After all, Miss Wagstaff, bear in mind that the grandfather of Murphey would have kept our grandmothers one week on board his steamer to take them from New York to Havre."

Henry Wagstaff made this observation :

"I wonder sometimes if progress is appreciated by us once it has been attained. If boredom could be weighed, we would find that this young woman will absorb the same quantity in three days that her grandmother did in one week at sea."

"Dear sir," replied Douglas Grant, "do you wish to know the best way of appreciating progress ? It is to lose it for awhile and to live among barbarians. What a pity that we could not have brought with us two or three

hundreds of our wealthy compatriots, who are always railing against the deficiencies of our civilization. What a pleasure it would be to put them face to face with the same existence that humanity led under Charlemagne !”

“For that matter I should like better to bring with me two or three millions of our working-men. Now they are enlightened, but will they remain so ? What stirring, impressive lessons could be given to them on the events which have caused the collapse of Europe, and the part played by their brother workmen some fifty years ago.”

Edith, a profound theorist, like many of her age, protested against this assertion.

“You say nothing about the part the employers played, dear papa.”

“The part of the employers—at least, when the end came—was at first to be impoverished by their men, who every year went on strike, and insisted upon doing less work and having more wages. When it became impossible to continue with that ominous progression, the part of the employers was first to become bankrupts, then knocked down, sprinkled with bombs, or burned to death in their factories by their employees. Was not the Capital which

they had destroyed with their own hands still responsible for their starvation? Really, one fails to understand how reasonable creatures could have lost their common sense to such a degree."

The young girl, politician as she was, and never short of an argument, was about to reply, when Douglas Grant interrupted.

"If you will believe me," he suggested, "we will defer this case for a week. When you have talked one hour with Duc Rollon, you will be better fitted to discuss the question of Capital and Labour, even in the Parliament at Washington."

"Well said," approved Henry Wagstaff. "Let us go on deck to breathe the air."

His eyes, still young, sparkled with mischief, for it was his daughter, still more than the Labour party, whom he wanted to impress with a lesson of facts. To tell the truth, his offspring, by her advanced tendencies, made him uneasy at times.

CHAPTER V

AT midday the point showed that the *Terrapine* was some five hundred miles East of Cape Charles, 71 degrees longitude, which is that of Boston. The direction intersected the course followed by freight steamers plying between the different ports of the Eastern coast of the American continent. Competition of the railroads, and still more that of aeroplanes, had put an end to the regular passenger steamers. On more than one occasion Murphey, according to his commands, had to make a détour in order to keep out of range of curious eyes. These games of hide-and-seek greatly amused the travellers. It was the same with the second marconigram, flashed in the afternoon for the special use of the reporters :

Approaching Charleston. Anchor to-night in the bay. Will visit the city to-morrow.

This good joke caused a hearty laugh to

those at table, especially to Douglas Grant, who wished to make up for his blunder.

"Elzear Turcote will see he has nothing to fear, and can sleep soundly. However shrewd he may be, it is possible to throw him off the scent."

"Not so sure," remarked Henry Wagstaff. "Should he be curious, his consular agent will be able to tell him that the *Terrapine* is unknown at Charleston."

"Never mind," retorted Douglas Grant. "To-morrow morning we will announce a delay caused by a slight accident. At that moment we shall be half-way to the Normandy shore."

The day was magnificent, and was spent by Aunt Lavinia in a sweet reverie. Edith herself, who had never felt the fascination of the ocean, called to mind some of the old romances which she had read before she had become a serious person, and found these people, for whom love seemed to be the aim of life, much less ridiculous. A collection of political discourses, brought along to while away her leisure hours, lay unopened on her lap. From her steamer chair which the swell could not reach, owing to the marvellous con-

struction of the yacht, she watched Douglas Grant and Warren Islington, a few paces away, plunged in an absorbing conversation. Not once did they look at her.

“Poor auntie !” she thought, smiling to herself. “I suppose she no longer fears that they will kill each other for the sake of my beautiful eyes.”

At dinner she wore a charming dress, but Douglas Grant, inobservant of the fact, occupied the entire meal in giving a sort of preparatory lecture on the surprises awaiting them.

“You will see,” he said, “a real feudal seigneur living in a fortified castle, surrounded by some thirty children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and a host of servitors—I should almost say serfs—inhabiting all the nooks and corners of the old manor, and employing themselves with the necessary work of a primitive existence. They make shoes out of coarse hides ; they weave hemp and wool and make clothing. At the first alarm they are ready to fight for their chief.”

“Fight against whom ?” asked Miss Cornell. “I thought that for them, as for the ‘Cid’ of my great uncle, *le combat était fini faute de combattants*.”

“ They have some undesirable neighbours, a tribe of bandits who are called ‘ les Saboteurs ’ —a name which evokes some tragic memories. These, seeking refuge in the ruins of the cities, are the lineage of the old anarchists, whose traditions they continue, only they have nothing more to destroy. By the way, Miss Cornell, since you have mentioned ‘ Cid,’ you are going to see a living picture of him.”

“ Oh, how delightful !” exclaimed the old maid ; “ who is the hero ?”

“ The heir-presumptive of Duc Rollon—son of his eldest son, who is dead. I have never met a more wonderful young man. It is a great pity that he does not know how to read.”

“ Is it possible that they are in that condition ?”

“ There, we are touching Duc Rollon’s weak point. You may say for his defence that it is the *idée fixe* of a man who is suffering from a slight mental aberration after passing through frightful struggles. According to this simple mind, all the catastrophes which have befallen him and his people were the result of an over-civilization.”

“ Who knows ?” murmured Henry Wagstaff.

"If you don't know, you, the great historian, who does know? Be that as it may, this venerable victim imitates, without being aware of it, the legend of the old King. Warned by the fairies that his daughter would pierce her hand while spinning, this too wise father commanded every spindle in his kingdom to be destroyed. So, in the same way, Duc Rollon believes that the Normans should remain semi-barbarians in order to escape the perils of an abhorred civilization."

"Well, then, will he receive us?" asked Edith.

"I think so, provided he finds in us only travellers, which we are, and not apostles of progress. He has reverted by instinct to the primitive usages of hospitality. I have experienced it, although I saw him away from his castle. Women will be still more welcomed by this old knight, and that is why I wanted your company and that of your aunt."

The explorer continued to divert his friends with the things they were going to see, and the chances of success which might be expected from the enterprise. After which the ladies repaired to their own quarters.

"To-morrow morning," announced Douglas Grant, "the marconigraph will say that Charleston has charmed us. It will be our last lie; for after that we will no longer fear being outdistanced by Elzear Turcote."

But the next morning, upon stepping on the captain's bridge, he found Murphey with his eyes glued to his marine glasses, obliquely directed in the air.

"What in the devil are you looking for—a gale forming?" he asked.

Without replying, the captain handed the glasses to him, and pointed in a Northerly direction.

"A passenger aeroplane!" exclaimed Douglas Grant, after having searched attentively for several seconds. "It passes over us. Confound these Canadians if it is they!"

A few minutes later, the enormous bird, with its outstretched wings of two hundred square metres, towered above the *Terrapine*, and slackened its flight like a hawk ready to pounce upon its prey. One could distinguish the closed basket, resembling the cabin of a sailing-vessel.

"If they have dynamite on board, there is a fine opportunity of suppressing us without

leaving a trace for the police," grumbled Murphey.

The idea, even though not likely, was striking by its possibility. Brave men—and Douglas Grant was brave to temerity—are apt to feel a revolt worse than fear when facing a danger against which it is impossible to fight. During the last war some enormous battleships had disappeared as in a mysterious tragedy, with their crews and powerless cannons. From an aeroplane passing above them, the aerial torpedo, unerring, inevitable, had fallen with its mortal errand. A shell the size of a coconut would be enough to destroy the *Terrapine*. A few screams of terror soon silenced, a few bubbles of air coming to the surface . . . and in an eternal uncertainty the friends on shore would shed tears, bitter tears, over the empty graves of their loved ones. The huge bird approached nearer while lowering its flight. The antenna of the marconigraph could be discovered. Suddenly a Canadian flag was unfurled, and oh! exasperating mockery, saluted! It was the answer of Elzear Turcote to the fallacious telegrams by which his rivals had pretended to lure his credulous soul.

The explorer shook his fist in the direction

of the aerial ship which was going towards the east with a speed insulting to the forty knots of the *Terrapine*. Always phlegmatic, Murphey shrugged his shoulders.

“Do you think that they are going to Europe?” asked his companion.

“Where on earth do you suppose they are going?”

“But they are several hundred miles South of their course.”

“That shows that they were looking for us, and, by Jove! they have found us. In fact, for them who survey a horizon of one hundred miles, the thing is easy.”

“However, they are supposed to believe that we are at Charleston.”

“Probably credulity is not one of their weak points. It would have been advisable to have gone to Charleston first, invited the Canadian Consul on board the yacht for luncheon, and put to the open sea immediately afterwards. But I never proffer my advice unasked.”

As one may guess, Murphey had felt aggrieved not to have been let in the secret of the expedition from the start.

With a dejected face Douglas Grant ap-

proached the awning astern where Edith was dispensing the honours of the matutinal meal.

“Anything new?” asked the company.

His only reply was to point to the aeroplane flying at the horizon, and since it was no longer in a vertical position over the awning, was perfectly visible.

“The Canadians?” asked Warren Islington. “Then they will reach the domains of Duc Rollon before us!”

But already the explorer had recovered the clearness of his judgment.

“I do not think so,” he said, “for this reason. In our time travellers bound for France are few, and they generally travel by air. They are sure to search for the raised plateau of the estuary of the Seine, where a landing is much easier. That is what I did four years ago, and that is what the Canadians are sure to do, never suspecting that they will not be able to proceed half an hour without being stopped. Then it will be necessary to take the orders from Duc Rollon, who lives fifty miles inland. We, on the contrary, landing at the mouth of the Orne, are only a few hours from La Brèche. That is the name of my venerable

friend's residence. Thus, you see, we gain at least two days."

For the tenth time the reminiscences of the explorer were called into play. Aunt Lavinia wanted to know if these Normans had returned to paganism.

"No, something still more extraordinary happened, they became once more fervent Catholics. That is the sole result of the former persecutions."

"But there are no more priests, no more churches," said Aunt Lavinia.

"The Saboteurs have destroyed the churches. The priests have died from old age, or in a less peaceful way. But some missionaries came from our continent and are wandering over the solitudes of old Europe. Duc Rollon favoured their work among his Normans, who welcomed them as the first faithful ones did the Apostles."

"History repeats itself," said Henry Wagstaff.

"How I long for the morrow," exclaimed Aunt Lavinia, growing more and more excited.

While she was indulging in her dreams her companions were falling back on a dis-

concerting reality. Wilkins was charged to send this cypher to Washington :

The Canadian aeroplane overtook and passed us. We are manoeuvring accordingly. Still hope we will succeed.

The following day, the 23rd, the fourth day of the voyage, uselessly lengthened because of the attempted deceit, the passengers had the pleasure of seeing the first land a little after midday. The captain, quitting the bridge for a few moments, reported that they were off the Scilly Islands.

“In my grandfather’s time,” he said, “we would have been signalled to England and France, but the semaphore is no longer in existence, and the light-tower, if still standing, has no more light. For that reason I prefer to pass this dangerous spot in broad daylight.”

“Poor Miss Cornell, the country of your dreams is mostly a country of ruins,” sighed Douglas Grant ; “you will realize it more than once before we return to America.”

It was still light when the *Terrapine* anchored in a small bay which had been examined carefully on the chart, and verified

by sounding. Out of precaution the yacht remained at a short distance from the shore and kept under steam.

The mouth of the Orne was not far off.

"Perhaps some fishermen are living there, and they may have barks. I don't want callers," explained Douglas Grant; "it is I who propose to call to-morrow."

The entire shore, as far as sight could reach from East to West, was bordered by a belt of dense, almost impenetrable, forest. The country seemed to have returned to its virginal splendour. The calm of this dead land which once was replete with animation, the silence of the tomb succeeding the noise of life, the solemnity of the desert, where the eye could not behold even the faint smoke from a human habitation, all appealed highly to the cultured minds of the newcomers as they contemplated the dark barrier seemingly raised against them and their intrusion.

They themselves, passing from a vertiginous speed, to a sudden immobility, experienced a relaxation of nerves approaching to dizziness. The sun ready to set (that one had never been affected by riots or strikes) bathed in a rosy tint the top of the trees and the soft undula-

tions of the dying swell. A quantity of seabirds, unaccustomed to the fear of man, were rocked around the hull of the beautiful yacht, sleeping, too, like them. Nature, incontestable mistress of this empire, had been restored to her rights, even over souls.

Edith Wagstaff, subjugated by this new power, yielded herself to its influence without comprehending it. Since she had been able to think she had been taught to rely only on the aid of artificial forces, replacing instinct. A mysterious voice seemed to ask if her admirations had not been directed in the wrong channel, at least sometimes. Was it possible that there was nothing more glorious in this world than to fly across the ocean from shore to shore in a few hours? Ought she to expect that the success of her maiden speech at the Tribune would remain in her memory as the happiest day of her life?

Still quite vague, this appeal to her inner being troubled her with a doubt, and, without realizing it, she sought the eyes of her young companions, to whom Science for one, and the successful termination of his enterprise for the other, were enough to fulfil their ideals of happiness. A few paces away they were

talking with eyes fixed on a map. She heaved a sigh. If questioned, she would have answered, in all conscience, that it was a sigh of pity for the banality of their sentiments.

Suddenly, at the summit of a hill dominating the horizon towards the South, a flame shot up, a signal repeated at a distance with a scarcely visible sparkle.

"That is their telegraph," said Douglas Grant. "Duc Rollon knows now the approach of suspicious visitors. A few hours hence the woods will be bristling with ambushes. Good Normans, sleep in peace; and you, ladies, come and sup. The table is laid, and the rising sun must see me on my way. I shall land alone."

The young girl was about to inquire if there were no probable dangers, and to show some solicitude; but, otherwise influenced by her feminine impressions, she reached the dining-saloon without saying a word.

"How beautiful your daughter is this evening!" whispered Miss Cornell in her brother's ear.

CHAPTER VI

THE moon, rising early, facilitated the surveillance around the yacht, ready, moreover, to unmask by its searchlights the smallest craft coming from the shore. The only sound that broke the stillness a little before dawn was the neighing of some horses. The steersman had just struck eight bells when Douglas Grant appeared on deck equipped for a long walk.

“How many men must I order for your escort?” asked Murphey, already installed in his armchair and smoking his first pipe.

“Not one. I shall go alone and unarmed. My rowers will return without quitting their benches. Your orders are only to prevent all communication between the yacht and the inhabitants of the shore ; but I doubt if you will have any visitors.”

“All right ; but if . . . you are late in returning ?”

“Rest easy. I shall return to-morrow, or perhaps this evening. I should like to be as certain that Duc Rollon will open his doors to my travelling companions. Well, we will know ere long. He is my friend, and I am hopeful.”

“But perhaps he is dead. Many things can happen in four years.”

“I shall be sure of it pretty soon. Lower the pinnace, and good luck to all.”

After a few minutes' rowing Douglas Grant felt the keel grating in the sands. He found himself at the mouth of a stream losing itself beneath the cobble-stones, in a slight crevice of the cliffs, which were carpeted with impenetrable gorse. Without hesitating he leaped vigorously to the ground, and by a sign ordered the sailors to row back to the yacht. Then he waited, knowing well that the shore was not so deserted as it seemed. In fact, a dozen men, the presence of whom there was nothing to indicate, suddenly surrounded him.

He already knew the Normans of the Twenty-first Century who, at the moment of his short stay among them, had inspired in him a sympathy bordering on admiration. The forced reversion to a quasi-primitive existence had revived the moral and physical

qualities of one of the strongest races which have appeared on the face of the globe. Health, vigour, indomitable energy, showed on the faces and in the eyes of these guardians of their native soil, ready to die in its defence. All wore a long cutlass in their belts ; most of them carried a lance, while others leaned on flintstone guns, found, no doubt, on some ancient panoplies, the only firearms available for warriors deprived of modern percussion cartridges.

With hands up to show that he was an inoffensive traveller, Douglas Grant asked this question in very correct French :

“ Who is in command among you ? ”

“ I,” replied a giant, whose blond moustache and beard did not hide the red lips of a young man in full splendour. He advanced with the calm dignity of a descendant of high lineage. Suddenly he uttered a joyous exclamation :

“ Douglas Grant ! ”

“ Pierre de Mondeville ! How is your grandfather, Duc Rollon ? ”

“ He is growing old, but his memory is good. You will be received as a friend, all the more so because this big ship, signalled last night, caused us some misgivings.”

"She is not a big ship," said the explorer, smiling. "If, this time, I have not crossed the ocean by aeroplane, it is because I have an old man and two women as companions. I beg your hospitality for them and for me."

"That can be decided only by grandfather. I will have you conducted to La Brèche."

"Are you not coming with me?"

"I will await your return."

"Oh, do come. It would be so agreeable to make the trip together!"

"And delightful for me, but unfortunately my orders do not allow it, and Duc Rollon does not stand breach of discipline. I left him last evening, and have been on duty all night, with the mandate to shoot down all invaders. Go at once to reassure my grandfather, and do your utmost to make him accede to your demand. Since we are speaking of orders——"

He hesitated, and his eyes glanced towards the yacht to which the pinnace had just returned. The Columbian hastened to reassure him.

"Never fear; I also have given my orders. No one will leave before my return. I will signal them 'All is well.'"

He tied his handkerchief to his cane and

waved it in the air. A pennant was run up the mast of the *Terrapine*, which, translated into maritime language, meant "Made out."

"Now I am ready to leave," said Douglas Grant. "Do you think that I can return this evening?"

"Yes, if, as I hope, Duc Rollon will not keep you too long in suspense. He will know that I favour your request."

At these words he drew aside a handsome lad, alert and cunning at the same time, who, one would have said, belonged to the lower class, in a country less levelled in the matter of caste by the rude visitation of all the plagues known to humanity. The young chief spoke to him in a low voice for a few minutes, then presented him to his friend.

"This is Castillon, who will be your guide, responsible for your safety. He has his horse. Here is mine. Excuse his imperfect equipment."

"Who would notice the saddle on such a marvellous animal?" replied Douglas Grant.

"Hundreds of the like, quite wild, are to be found in our deserts," sighed Pierre de Monderville. "Unfortunately, even a good horse cannot make up for a bad road."

"I know what it is," replied the explorer. "I have traversed France from East to West. This morning it is only the question of a little trip."

"Well, good luck to you, a pleasant journey, and this evening we will meet, I hope."

The two riders mounted their steeds and left by a path lost in the forest, so narrow that it was impossible to go abreast. The Norman took the lead. He wore clothes of coarse fustian, big boots of raw hide, and a blue woollen knitted cap. His very long gun, carried on a shoulder-belt, gave him a vague resemblance to the Arab warriors seen in old pictures. They could advance only at a foot pace owing to the uneven and rocky ground. But the gait of the horses was lengthened, and they were very sure-footed. Suddenly they emerged from the woods which formed a defensive border, five miles wide all along the coast. The path became something like a road, and the riders were able to talk. The guide opened the conversation :

"You know La Brèche?" he asked.

"No: I crossed Normandy by another road. I landed at the mouth of the Seine."

"That is very far off. They say that on the

other side of the river one is sure to be massacred by the Saboteurs. They live in great numbers in a place which is called Le Hâvre."

"Some are found in your districts?"

"Not many, but yet too many; they have established their dens in the ruins of a city that their ancestors ended in destroying after the war. As they cannot eat fragments of old statuary nor broken pieces of old machines, they live by fishing and hunting—leaving alone what they steal from us when they have the good luck not to be caught."

"And when they are caught?"

Castillon's smile broadened, and he pointed to a huge oak standing alone on a small hill, some hundred paces away. From one of the branches of the tree was hanging an oblong mass.

"I understand," answered the explorer.

He made no other comment, but while continuing the route he thought that Henry Wagstaff, after he had beheld this oak, might write a chapter on the evolution of criminal justice in the course of ages. The lugubrious spectacle, often seen in young America in the time of the Lynch Law, was found, for the same

causes, in a country dead from old age. Here the Saboteurs were replacing the negroes.

"We are now half-way," announced the Norman after a long silence. "Here is a small river ; let us water our horses."

A huge heap of ruins was hidden beneath a network of bramble and ivy, the growth of years. One could distinguish the remains of an immense smoke-stack broken in its fall. A factory had moved its wheels and vomited its smoke in this desert, once full of animation and life. Castillon, surmising the curiosity of the traveller, related briefly its history in the style of a well-trained guide.

"That was a spinning-mill which the workmen blew up and burned, as they did many others. The owner and his family are still there—beneath the ruins."

"And the workmen?"

"Oh, they have died of hunger, or illness, or were killed during the invasion."

The youth related these horrors with the cool conciseness of a fellaah squatted before the violated and opened sepulchre of the Pharaohs who had been dead for forty centuries. Castillon had not seen these catastrophes which he narrated. For this simple soul a thousand

years, more or less, on a heap of rubbish did not matter much.

Douglas Grant asked :

“Wouldn't you have liked to live in those times ?”

“Yes, and no,” he answered. “One lived better ; but one was obliged to work hard, and after earning ten sous the Government claimed four. I am repeating what Duc Rollon says.”

“Wouldn't you like to be able to read ?”

The lad seemed surprised that an intelligent man should pose such an irrelevant question. Shrugging his shoulders and twisting his lips, he replied :

“I have never seen but one book—that is the Mass book of Father Eustache. He knows how to read : he knows everything. Look, he made this bridge which we are going to cross instead of paddling in the river with the water up to our saddle-girths as we used to do.”

The bridge had been made by a carpenter skilled in his art. But the explorer was struck to see that the joinings of the lumber were strengthened by some iron ties of recent work.

“It seems, then, that Father Eustache has a forge ?” he asked, somewhat chagrined.

“ Yes, since last year. Oh, there have been many changes at La Brèche. Fancy, you will hear a clock striking the hours !”

The river forded, they entered a less deserted district. They passed some habitations with thatched roofs, and through the half-open doors could be seen women knitting, or plying the shuttle on the noisy looms. Against the wall were some cow-hides undergoing the process of a primitive tanning.

The men were tilling the fields, or driving some carts, whose massive wheels creaked on their wooden axle-trees. Trotting became possible on a less uneven road. Suddenly the guide pointed out a mill whose tic-tac could be heard at a distance.

“ That is my home,” said he, with evident pride. “ My father is a miller now, since Father Eustache fixed his millstones. Before that, we had to crush the corn on flat stones.”

“ Won’t you stop and see your parents for a few minutes ?”

“ I should like to do so, but my orders are not to stop until we are in La Brèche. We have no time to lose if we want to be there for dinner.”

The road was intercepted by a railroad embankment through which it should have passed. Formerly, a metallic arch, now destroyed, opened a passage under the road. At present, the thoroughfare was closed by a barricade of distorted iron beams. A double slope up and down gave access to the track whose rails could still be discovered beneath the grass which had grown unmolested for half a century.

“Millions and millions of tons!” thought the explorer, who for several weeks had lived with this one idea.

The sun was not far from the meridian when they entered a gorge, or rather, a fissure, abruptly cutting a mountain of granite. It reminded Douglas Grant of the cañons of Colorado, excepting that its walls were much lower, and instead of being bare porphyry were draped with curtains of luxuriant green. This dense vegetation, everywhere apparent, hid even the bed of a murmuring brooklet at the bottom of a narrow chasm, where the road had found its place with difficulty. Suddenly the passage seemed closed by a perpendicular rock, which was striped by a white feathery cascade. Brusquely deviating to the right,

the road made a gentle zigzag ascent, and finally reached a terrace. There was an old porch, whose massive iron-framed doors might have defended the feudal donjon against a siege.

“We are at La Brèche,” announced Castillon as he dismounted.

CHAPTER VII

IN the centre of a spacious esplanade a tall, white-bearded man was listening to two peasants. His back was turned to the visitor, who, on approaching, could hear the litigants in an open-air law-suit noisily arguing their respective cases.

"Enough !" commanded Duc Rollon, for it was he. Addressing the two men, he resumed : " You, you have ceded the right of thoroughfare on your property under the condition that your neighbour mends the road. You "—pointing to the other man—" have promised twenty cartloads of stones."

" My horses are sick."

" If your horses are sick, why do you need a road ? When they are well, fulfil your agreement, then you will be entitled to pass. Be off, good men, and don't squabble any more."

The court having risen, Douglas Grant, hat in hand, presented himself.

"I salute the worthy disciple of Solomon."

"Douglas Grant! Is it you who have landed on our shores and put all my Normans in a flutter? Our hunters are already preparing a resistance against the audacious invader."

"The invader is in your hands as a hostage. As to his army, it consists of two women, a young man of science, and an old historian."

"Women! Great heavens! what can attract them to this miserable desert?"

"Since they have read the story of my travels, they are longing to make the acquaintance of famous Duc Rollon."

The Seigneur of La Brèche showed himself less flattered than might have been expected. Whilst he was pondering his answer, Douglas Grant studied this proud and sad countenance, and thought how well it could have served as a model to a painter for "Laocoon," when he pronounced the words which might have saved Troy: "*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.*"

The Columbian pleaded his cause:

"Duc, my companions never did you any harm, and may do you good some day."

"Do you think people are obliged to accept a service against their will?" replied the old man.

“So, then, I must return to my boat and tell my ladies that a French nobleman’s door is closed to them.”

“Will they have a numerous escort?”

“Their escort will consist of my two friends. We will come without arms, as it behoves visitors to do who are begging for hospitality. As for the crew, not one man shall set foot on shore without your permission.”

“I must reflect. In the meantime I beg you to honour my house with your presence. We are just going to table, but first take time to free yourself of the dust of our roads.”

Refreshed by his necessary ablutions, Douglas Grant penetrated at once into an enormous hall, the furniture of which, badly impaired, had been replaced as well as possible by the poor workmen of modern Normandy. During the supreme disasters, La Brèche, remotely situated from the main road, had, owing to this fact, been protected, and had thus escaped from the troops of the enemies. The Marquis de Mondeville, then a young man, had defended it with heroic bravery. But he had not been able to prevent its being set on fire, and, alas! the incendiaries were to be

found among his compatriots. Traces of the flames were to be seen everywhere.

Duc Rollon, with the manners of a real seigneur, presented his guest to the persons at table, numbering not less than thirty-five, all of whom were his descendants. Seven sons, all married (the eldest one was dead), four daughters, as many sons-in-law, and finally some twelve or so grandchildren of both sexes and various ages, composed the tribe grouped round the patriarch.

The men were tall and vigorous. The women, lacking distinction and grace, could not be termed ugly. One of them, however, by her remarkable beauty and delicate type, formed a contrast to the others, and attracted the eyes of the traveller. Only to see the tenderness displayed by her grandfather, as he leaned over her, was enough to show that she was the favourite. Douglas Grant resolved to employ her influence in order to gain his cause. Curious to see nearer this stranger, who seemed to have fallen from another planet, Elizabeth de Mondeville claimed him as her neighbour at table; so Douglas Grant was placed between Duc Rollon and his granddaughter.

Standing, the patriarch asked the blessing, then, all being seated, the meal was attacked in a silence caused by the presence of a superior person. Yet, however much they might be intimidated, these good people had not lost their ravenous appetites.

Elizabeth entered into conversation with her neighbour.

“ You are accustomed to a very different fare from ours ; but a long horse-back ride will have made you less exacting.”

This phrase showed the modesty, alas ! too well justified, of the young hostess. Nevertheless, the quality replaced the lack of luxury of the food, and reconciled one to the limited variety — so the Columbian declared with unmistakable sincerity.

Without further comment the young girl asked :

“ You have never been here ? ”

“ Never, mademoiselle ; landing farther East, and directing my way towards the centre, this place was not on my road. A happy chance brought me in contact with Duc Rollon and his grandson on a ‘ tour of inspection,’ as our provincial governors would say.”

“ Your neighbour is Pierre’s sister,” said the

old man, listening attentively to the conversation.

"I guessed as much from their resemblance to each other. Ah, mademoiselle, Heaven knows what would have happened to me when I landed, had your brother not been on the spot to take me prisoner and spare my life!"

"This time you came by boat, why not by aeroplane, as you did four years ago? At least, so they say."

"I am not alone. I have two men and two women companions; the latter do not care to travel by air."

"Some Columbian ladies? Is it possible? Shall we see them?"

"I came to ask your grandfather's permission to bring them to La Brèche."

Elizabeth's eyes, shining with an ardent desire, sought those of her old parent. But the young favourite, already well experienced in her rôle, understood that the moment had not come to bring to bear her youthful seduction. Dropping the subject, she said:

"In my grandfather's room there is a picture of a boat, which, no doubt, resembles yours. As for an aeroplane, I cannot fancy what it is like."

Douglas Grant, knowing that every one of his words was being taken in by the grand-sire, made this well-guarded answer :

“ You seem very happy. All the boats and aeroplanes in the world would not make you happier.”

“ So I am told every day,” she said sighing.

“ Yes,” affirmed her grandfather ; “ compared with what their fathers have seen and suffered, the lot of these children is a very happy one. I envy the dead their rest, when I seek in vain to chase away the visions which haunt my memory. But you are my guest. I must not throw more gloom over a too deficient hospitality.”

“ I have never enjoyed a better one in any place on the globe,” assured the Columbian, with sincere effusion.

“ You have probably repeated the same phrase to the Arab in the desert who has received you in his tent, and he believed you because he does not know. We are both barbarians, but I am a barbarian who knows. That is why these poor ignorant people wanted me for their chief. They imagined that all science had been given to me simply because I can read. Ah, how I pray God

to leave them ignorant of those plagues which have made barbarians of us in the Twenty-first Century! War, the hatred of the poor against the rich, the strikes which brought famine, alcohol which brought degeneration, the sabotage which brought destruction."

In sorrowful silence Douglas Grant listened to the complaints of the old chief. A deep musical voice broke in :

"Grandfather, our guest is losing his spirits and appetite."

"You are right, little one. Try to distract him for an hour in doing the honours of our capital."

A joyless smile resembling the cold rays of a winter sun accompanied these words. Douglas Grant understood that his request was going to be debated upon, and, for the first time since his departure from Washington, he felt a serious doubt as to his success. Duc Rollon, directing his steps towards an inner door, gave this order to one of his sons :

"Send for Castillon, and both of you come and confer with me."

The message sent by Pierre de Mondeville was apparently to exercise a ponderous in-

fluence on the expected decision. But before escorting the stranger out of doors, Elizabeth approached her grandfather and whispered a few words in his ear :

“Shall we go now?” she said with a sympathetic smile that restored hope to her companion.

The spacious esplanade could not fail to interest even an accomplished globe-trotter. To Douglas Grant this spectacle recalled nothing that he had ever seen. At the same time, too much absorbed by his anxiety to be curious, he thought above all of his companions on board the *Terrapine* and of their disappointment should he return with a refusal. He could see the Premier Wagstaff reading the despatch announcing the fiasco of the project. But it was still worse to picture the quizzical smile of Elzear Turcote.

The girl on her side was perplexed by some reasons and remained silent. Finally, with a charming frankness, she confessed :

“I have spoken too quickly to my grandfather. Do you know what I have asked him?”

“Yes, mademoiselle, as you are very kind, any pain inflicted on others distresses you, and

you imagine the great disappointment of my companions if your door is closed to them."

"Yes, it is that. I thought first of others. Now, I am going to think of myself. It is hard to be an object of pity. Your ladies will laugh at everything they will see here, beginning with my own person."

"Do you mean that I seem inclined to laugh?"

"You are an observing traveller who makes study an object. They will be only sight-seers who will ridicule or 'make fun.'"

"Wait until you know them. One, an old maid of sixty, is the best and most tender-hearted of creatures. The other, a young girl like you, a little older, devotes her life to improving the condition of your sex. At the first glance, she is sure to adore you."

"Of course, she wears velvet dresses, silk stockings, satin slippers, and feathers on her head?"

Douglas Grant could not repress a smile at this picture of his companion's travelling attire.

"I imagine that pictures of fine ladies as well as those of boats are hanging on the walls of your grandfather's room. Great ladies are

seen in such costumes perhaps, but, as I never studied the subject, don't ask me, please, if Edith Wagstaff wears silk or woollen stockings. At least, I am afraid that she will not exhibit velvet gowns, satin slippers, nor plumed hats."

"Oh! I am so sorry. I should have liked so much to see these things which I never expect to know."

"Better not to know them than to feel envious."

"Never fear," she replied with a peculiar smile; "it is not only portraits of fine ladies, but some portraits of great saints which adorn grandfather's room. Envy is a feeling that a good Christian must not know."

The young man feasted his eyes on Elizabeth's mystical beauty, then he made a reply which in his mouth would have astonished Aunt Lavinia:

"Let us hope, then, that Edith Wagstaff is a good Christian. You might, on certain points, make her envious."

"Grandfather is looking for us. Now we will know his decision."

Duc Rollon approached slowly, his brow contracted with care, his tall form slightly bent.

One could see that he was fighting against the terrors of a responsibility.

"Young man," he said, "tell me again that you have come here with no thought whatever of conquest in your mind. Of all the glory of our fathers, only one thing remains: the love of liberty which they so badly understood. As an explorer you find in us a half-savage people. As a conqueror, you would only find an utter waste and a few hundred men, fallen in the fight with me as their chief, to put into their graves. Nobody cares for life here."

By a slight nod of assent the girl, who had so little to make life worth living, corroborated the statement. Struck with the poignant truth of this conviction, Douglas Grant answered with a voice trembling with sympathy:

"Duc Rollon, you have me as a hostage who only begs you as a favour to accept some others more precious. Is that acting like an invader?"

"It is enough," decided the old man, to whom the eyes of his granddaughter had addressed a mute appeal. "I will receive your companions. Undoubtedly you will go

to meet them. When do you want to leave? I advise you to take a night's rest."

"With your permission I will start at once. We have six hours of daylight before us. By nightfall I can be on board the yacht and impart the good news to my companions."

"And reassure them as to your fate," added Duc Rollon smiling. "Little one, go give the order to Castillon."

When the two men were alone, the chief asked:

"Have you ever heard of the Saboteurs—our undesirable neighbours?"

"Yes, I know that they steal your cattle and your corn."

"They are still fonder of a more delicate booty. To fall into their hands would be worse than death for the ladies. To-morrow you will find an escort and some horses waiting on shore. But you Columbians must bring your firearms, which are better than ours. These bandits may watch you landing and the temptation will be strong. Here in a fenced enclosure, well guarded, your companions will be in security. I am longing to see you safe in port."

"You will see us here to-morrow, with God's

help," replied Douglas Grant, his countenance somewhat fallen.

One hour later he and his companion Castillon were riding in the direction of the sea. Quickening their pace, they talked little. Once, forgetting himself, the explorer spoke aloud the thought which was in his mind :

" Poor Aunt Lavinia who loves adventures."

The sun was setting behind the yacht when the indefatigable traveller, contented with his expedition, made the prearranged signal.

Shortly afterwards the pinnace sent ashore rowed him to the boat, and the ladder lowered.

CHAPTER VIII

PIERRE DE MONDEVILLE slept but little that night. However, it was not his bed of ferns, nor his fear of the Saboteurs which had kept him awake. One day had sufficed to surround his soul with another horizon. On the morning before, his peaceful and contented mind was still slumbering in the narrow precincts of a world clouded by ignorance. After the departure of Douglas Grant, when the rays of the sun had cast a roseate hue on the swell of the rising tide, the piercing eye of the young man had studied the incomprehensible details of the ship, lying at anchor but a few hundred fathoms away. Only a faint idea of a vessel had been conveyed to him by some engravings rescued from conflagration and plunder. And, suddenly on the deck of this yacht which seemed to him of fabulous dimensions, some white apparitions with vaporous veils had mysteriously alighted

like fairies. The soft breeze had unfolded their light-coloured scarfs. Then, on the cushions of their chairs, these women, or semi-goddesses strayed from Olympus, had reclined with motions of a fascinating grace. And from that moment Pierre de Mondeville paid no more attention to the elegant outlines of this boat, nor sought to discover the use of the elevated antenna of the marconigraph.

Until now the appearance of Douglas Grant emerging from the Unknown, four years before, had been the most astonishing event of his life. But still, the stranger, though a man apart, was not after all widely different from the types which Pierre might meet at any moment. As may be supposed, the explorer was soberly dressed; his strong boots might even have been made at La Brèche. On the contrary, these women seemed to be supernatural beings. At their approach all mortals would fall on their knees and worship.

While to his father and uncles, who had reverted to semi-barbarism, it had seemed quite natural to make a choice among the unprepossessing young women dwelling in the huts scattered over the surrounding plains, a superior instinct, an unconscious inheritance

from his forefathers, had mysteriously influenced Pierre's nature. More than once this handsome youth had detected a look of ardent admiration in some poor maiden crossing his path. But the humble and innocent appeal of her eyes inspired in him a sort of terror. She was not made for him, and he knew it. His Ideal bore no resemblance to her. He was longing for a companion whose dress would be a caress to the sight, whose soft hand would be a summons to the lips. But, for him, alas! she was a dream. And then the Ideal suddenly had revealed herself, distinct but visible. For endless hours he had wondered if, by some un hoped-for luck, he might have a closer view of her, hear her voice, touch the folds of her dress with his hands—he who was accustomed to dresses of rough hemp linen, jackets of coarse wool, almost resembling the frock of Father Eustache. Knowing his grandfather as he did, there was little doubt that Douglas Grant would have to return to his boat only to sail home soon after. And he would carry away with him that vision of an unknown and superior world for ever vanished into imaginary space.

Against all expectations Duc Rollon had not proved himself inflexible. Douglas Grant

had brought back a favourable answer. On the morrow these daughters of the ocean would place their dainty feet on this devastated and unfortunate land.

Pierre de Mondeville, to whom fear was unknown, was fretting his soul with anguish. 'What shall I say to them? But shall I be able to talk to them? At the sight of a man so different from their kind, they are sure to turn away with disdain.'

The daylight* was long in coming. While his men were sitting round the camp-fire to dry their clothes wet by the night dew, Pierre de Mondeville had followed the stream at a little distance, where he was about to perform the most elaborate toilet which he had ever made in his whole life. His companions would have been astonished could they have seen with what care he brushed off every blade of grass, or sprig of moss, from his woollen coat and knitted cap. Then, looking at himself in the pool, which reflected as a mirror, he caressed his long hair and silky beard. Had he been more conceited he would have deemed himself less unworthy of meeting the glances of the fair travellers, still slumbering in their soft beds.

Early in the morning the men passengers of the *Terrapine* met together to hear their companion's report.

"We shall be received," said Douglas Grant, "as friends . . . but undesirable friends. Duc Rollon, I must tell you, took one hour to decide the question. With his unusual intelligence, he well understood that, as devastated as his country may be, it is sure to be coveted by would-be colonists from our continent. Certainly we would not have obtained the permission of disembarking but for the presence of our ladies. This old Norman noble, with his superannuated ideas, judges that gallantry compels him to receive Miss Cornell and her niece."

"And the twenty-five million tons of iron?" asked Warren Islington.

"I haven't them in my pocket. To tell the truth, we don't hold them yet."

"And the Canadians?" asked Henry Wagstaff.

"Absolute silence on all that concerns them."

"A good sign, by all means."

"Neither good nor bad. Duc Rollon may expect them to-night. I never knew a less

communicative man. But, once again, he is a seigneur of the Middle Ages, and must be treated as such."

Warren Islington began to laugh.

"Are we going to learn that he keeps pages, entertains minstrels, and hangs villains?"

"My dear fellow, I will not answer for either the pages or the minstrels; as for the villains, I will show you one swinging in the wind from the branch of a tree. If only we don't see some others alive along the road I shall be thankful."

The deliberation was resumed. It was decided that the caravan should leave the yacht immediately after midday. As to the baggage, the ladies were requested to simplify it as much as possible. There remained the question of the presents sent by the Emperor. Douglas Grant admitted that the conversation with Duc Rollon had given him food for reflection. He was more and more struck to see what implacable rancour this old man had preserved against progress under all its forms.

"Senile decay," said Dr. Wilkins, shrugging his shoulders.

"Really," observed Henry Wagstaff, "since

I have seen this wonderful Nature, these superb forests replacing the factories and towns, I do not know what to think of Progress."

Douglas Grant went ashore to compare notes with Pierre de Mondeville. Some men had arrived from La Brèche, bringing saddle and pack horses.

"Your grandfather says that we must be well armed," declared the explorer. "Let me present you with this rifle. Its firing is quick, its aim is sure, and its range wide — so many advantages over your . . . respectable flint gun. Above all, its handling is very simple; in two minutes I will teach you."

The young man's eyes sparkled with delight.

"May its first shot be for the defence of your ladies!"

"I beg of you not to acquaint them with your generous desire, notwithstanding they are heroines, especially the elder."

Leaning on the yacht's railing, unaware that she was being mentioned at the same moment, Aunt Lavinia levelled her marine glasses on the young knight who had just received his

golden spurs. She tried to inspire her niece with her enthusiasm, but, it must be admitted, without success.

"Oh, my dear, he is as splendid as a warrior of ancient chivalry! Don't you want to look at him?"

"Oh, I have time enough for that," replied Edith Wagstaff. "I feel less interested in ancient warriors than I do in modern European proletarians. These I want to study here. And you, papa?"

"Oh, I doubt whether social questions have much weight in Duc Rollon's domains. I intend to look round and study it with an unbiassed mind. But wouldn't it be wise to take the cook with us? I don't trust the fare of savages."

"You have never had a better one in your life, that I promise you," said Douglas Grant, who had just returned to the yacht. "Behold the sort of savages you will have to deal with, who are full of attention for us."

He handed the glasses (through which he had been following the movements of the men on shore) to Edith's father.

"You see what they are doing? They are arranging a primitive wooden pier, so that the

ladies shall not wet their feet when stepping ashore."

At noon the boat with its five passengers touched the rustic landing-stage. Henry Wagstaff regretted that the doctor could not be included in the party, but it was deemed prudent not to exceed the number announced by Douglas Grant.

"Moreover," added the explorer, "Duc Rollon might hang poor Wilkins. For fifty years the country has not known any maladies, no doctor being at hand to treat them."

Pierre de Mondeville awaited his grandfather's guests. On nearing him, Miss Cornell said in a low voice :

"My dear, were I twenty-five years younger, I should certainly lose my head."

"Oh, Aunt Lavinia! one would say that you are Juliet on just perceiving Romeo, and that I am the nurse."

Romeo, cap in hand, hesitated to approach. But the impetuous Miss Cornell, wishing to be the first to land, had already placed her foot on the bow of the pinnace, and motioned to him for the help of his arm. So great was the Norman's emotion in finding himself in presence of a real lady, that he did not even notice

her age; but when Edith Wagstaff put her gloved fingers into his vigorous hand, he dared to rest his eyes on the embodied ideal of his dreams. Then he laughed to himself as he remembered the hours he had spent in fancying a picture so unlike the dazzling reality.

Miss Cornell deemed herself the proper one to pronounce the oratorical address under the solemn circumstance, and thus gave him time to recover his equanimity. Judging by its style it was not an improvisation.

“Monsieur, I beg you to know that it is not a foreign woman who comes to sit at your family hearth. We are descended from the same ancestors. If I am able to restrain my tears at the sight of the ruins heaped around the cradle of my race, it is because I admire the courage, defying fate, which irradiates your countenance.”

Never in his life had Pierre heard such long and fine phrases, except in the mouth of Father Eustache at the religious celebration in Duc Rollon's chapel. Somewhat puzzled by an address not quite intelligible, but unmistakably well meant, he contented himself by answering:

“I thank you, madame.”

"I am mademoiselle," corrected the old maid proudly. "This is my niece, Edith Wagstaff, who, like myself, until now has preferred independence to wedlock. This is her father. Finally, I present you to Warren Islington, a friend of Douglas Grant. For a long time he has been jealous of your affection for his comrade."

"No one could have spoken better," said the explorer; "but I think it is time for us to start."

The horses were brought; two of them had side-saddles, not very elegant, but comfortable. Conforming to the advice given, the Columbians were armed, with the exception of Henry Wagstaff, who had never touched a rifle in his life.

The vanguard, duly escorted, took the lead, the baggage following at a slower pace. Pierre de Mondeville was riding ahead, not trusting anyone but himself as scout of his party. While they were passing through a dense coppice wood, he suddenly dismounted to examine a footstep freshly imprinted on the trail. A man, barefooted, had just crossed it, and he knew that the Saboteurs, loathing all kinds of work, did not take the trouble of

manufacturing shoes for their use. Remounting, the young Norman, for the first time since they had started, took his place at the near side of Edith's horse.

Noticing that he held his gun ready to fire, she asked :

"We will have the pleasure of a hunt on the way?"

"Alas, mademoiselle, these woods do not only shelter rabbits and deer. Are you brave? The report of a gun does not frighten you?"

Never had she seen glistening in any man's eyes such youth and strength. Courageous by nature, she felt that under his protection no fear could move her soul.

"The ancestors of my grandmother used to fight the Red Indians at the side of their husbands," was the simple and proud reply.

The young man evinced the sadness always pervading his nature.

"Your ancestors conquered. My people have been defeated by more dangerous Indians, who have reduced us to our present condition. And you will soon see perhaps that the struggle is not finished."

At that moment a shot was heard at the

rearguard from which they were already separated by some distance. Douglas Grant and Warren Islington faced round, heading their horses in the direction of the noise.

“ Oh, stupid men !” exclaimed Pierre, “ what does it matter about the luggage ?”

The woods echoed with some sharper reports from the rifles. Furious cries were heard which were soon suppressed. Then a dead silence. But broken branches in the copse bespoke an approach.

“ Gallop ahead,” was Pierre de Mondeville’s order to the ladies, who at first frightened, had retained their cool-headedness.

He and his men sprang to the ground and faced the expected attack, ready to fire. The Saboteurs remained in the underwood, bent on the pursuit of their fleeing prey. A human creature unworthy of that name sprang at the head of Edith’s horse, trying to drag it away. Startled to silence the girl was endeavouring to defend herself with her primitive whip. Miss Cornell, left out of the bidding owing to her age, remembered the stories that she had read of fighting knights, and she uttered their war-cry of the ancient battle-fields :

“ A moi, France !”

Pierre de Mondeville, who had been thrown on the wrong scent for an instant, was in a few bounds beside the assaulters. He dared not fire for fear of wounding the young girl. Fortunately, the Saboteurs were contending for their prey, unheeding the proposition shouted by Aunt Lavinia at the top of her voice :

“Monsters ! spare her life and take mine.”

With the butt-end of his rifle the Norman dispersed the bandits, who knew only too well the fate reserved for them by the penal code of Duc Rollon. One of the band, however, more bestial than his comrades, laid his hideous hands on Edith's dress. Pierre grasped him by his collar, but the worn-out stuff did not resist, and the brute, for one second free, unsheathed his knife and tried to strike at his adversary's face. The latter parried the blow, receiving, however, a slight wound on his left arm. Then beneath the eyes of Edith, who was still in the saddle, a close fight began between the two wrestlers. It was of short duration. Two or three of Pierre's retainers came running up to the scuffle. Nothing remained for them but to tie down the Saboteur groaning beneath the knee of the big

Norman, for whom such a contest was a mere child's play.

At the same instant Douglas Grant and Warren Islington appeared, cursing the error which they had committed in defending the luggage, whilst a frightful fate menaced their companions. Henry Wagstaff, too, rode up, understanding nothing of this sudden adventure for which his peaceful labours as a historian had badly prepared him. The sight of two or three men shot down was an unknown spectacle for an old philosopher. He found his party grouped round a desperado well bound with ropes, who was uttering vehement imprecations.

"What on earth does all this mean?" he faltered.

But Mondeville, as calm as ever, did not seem to hear him; addressing the ladies, he said:

"I beg you to proceed as far as the stream, beyond which we shall find open country. Your companions will escort you. Besides, you need not fear any more inconvenience. Please wait for me there: I will rejoin you in a few minutes."

Douglas Grant exchanged a meaning look

with Warren Islington. He hastened the departure of the ladies.

“Let us go at once. I am longing for the sunshine. Moreover, this blaspheming rascal is treating you to unpleasant music.”

In fact, the place was singularly lugubrious, and the Columbians kept silent until the outskirts of the wood where a shallow stream was running. They all dismounted, not only to rest their legs, but to restore their unbalanced nerves as well.

Looking at his two companions, Douglas said :

“Try and attract the women’s attention. I have an errand over there. Keep still. I don’t want to be questioned.”

“What is it ?” asked Henry Wagstaff.

“I must go and meet the court and beg silence on the verdict which has been pronounced and executed. It is not necessary to cause any new emotions to these ladies. They have had enough for to-day.”

“How could you find a court in these woods ?” asked the excellent man.

“There is one though, and I suppose you will not blame them for having sentenced to death the brute who attacked your daughter.”

"What! he has already been condemned to death, and he will be executed?"

"Be sure that he *has* been executed, professor. That is why we were begged to go ahead and wait a few moments. It is much better that your daughter and her aunt are kept in ignorance of this decidedly gloomy episode. I am going to warn Pierre and his men."

He disappeared, to return shortly after with Pierre de Mondeville, who had been sworn to secrecy. Moreover, in the course of events, the feminine interest was to be diverted to his own person, for Douglas Grant had just discovered that the Norman was wounded.

"Come to the stream and wash your wound," said he. "I have brought with me a small surgeon's case, with lint and bandages. We will send for the yacht's doctor, but in the meanwhile I can dress the wound."

"A doctor? Nonsense!" protested Pierre, with a shrug of his shoulders.

Edith stepped forward and remonstrated:

"This is my affair. You have been wounded because of me, and I suspected nothing. Why have you waited for half an hour without being cared for?"

Pierre did not say what occupation had kept

him from thinking of himself. Submissively he sat on a fallen tree, unheeding his pain. A flesh-cut was nothing new to him, but something else was new: rosy, slender fingers, the nails of which were like the polished sea-shells he used to admire on the beach. Now steady and firm, then fleeting as in play, becoming slower and slower like a caress, their motions hypnotized him into an unknown dream of felicity. He dared not raise his eyes to the face of this beautiful, bountiful fairy. One thought alone absorbed his mind: "If only it could last!" He was roused by the explorer's voice, who standing behind him had watched the dressing.

"What fine work, Miss Edith! No need now of Wilkins."

The dream was ended. With an unexpected and rapid movement, Pierre de Mondeville glided to his knees, and taking Edith's hand pressed it to his lips.

Such an act of worship had disappeared long since from the rites of Columbia. The young girl had never seen or received it since she was born. At first she was more bewildered than pleased, but finally the feminine instinctive longing for worship triumphed. The pleasure

she felt—how she could have mocked it in another!—brought a deep blush to her cheeks, enhancing her beauty.

As for Miss Cornell, although thrilling with enthusiasm, she was able to keep silent. Among those present she alone realized the solemnity of an act so futile in appearance. It was like a spark stirred from the ashes of the admirable Latin civilization, and flashing across the gulf of a century to astonish a young race become ignorant on its side so far as the worship of woman was concerned.

Edith, pretending not to see the half-suppressed sneer of her young companions, put on her glove. The journey was resumed, and the road became practicable for the spurred horses to trot.

One hour had been lost, but, after all, that was not much in which to fight an encounter, to shoot down a few Saboteurs, to hang a man, to dress a wound, and to start to dreaming a young person just come from a land where there is no time for dreams.

Long shadows were softening the landscape. Nature, in a calm repose, smiled her sweet adieu to the disappearing sun, when the

Columbians crossed the threshold of La Brèche.

Duc Rollon, on the Esplanade, surrounded by his family and retainers, stood awaiting his guests.

CHAPTER IX

THE appearance of this old man, still handsome and singularly imposing, was a complete surprise to the Columbians, who had expected to contemplate a distressing decay in all respects, personal as well as material. Indeed, they felt much more awe than pity.

The weight of eighty years had not been able to bend Duc Rollon's stately figure; beneath the snow of his brows his eyes were still burning. His long hair, his aquiline nose protruding from his abundant beard, his simple and rather poor dress, the perfect neatness of which was its only luxury, made him the picture of an old chief of rebels, entrenched in the mountains, to desperately fight the victorious oppressors.

Was he not, in fact, the last fighter against the mortal invasion of barbarism? In his hands, and probably in the hands of some few

strugglers of his type, scattered on the surface of decayed empires, was still smouldering the lamp handed down from age to age since the end of Charlemagne barbarism.

Perhaps, after him, the small wavering light, preserved by such egregious efforts, might be fated to disappear into the night. Or then would it be the destiny of foreign hands to revive it in the old country, renewed, transformed, having lost even the name of France? What an agonizing nightmare for an old patriot like him!

Among these terrors was ending the life of François Prosper Antonin, Marquis de Monderville by right of birth, "Duc Rollon" by hazard of a nickname given to him in joke on the eve of a battle. And what battles he had seen! Unable to save his wife, at least he had succeeded in defending himself and his sons against the Saboteurs, whose motto was: "Mort aux bourgeois et aux nobles!" But, in order to perpetuate their race, the young men had been obliged to marry beneath their natural station. Their wives were courageous, strong peasant girls, knowing that they were of an inferior caste, and considering that they were created to serve their masters, sometimes

intelligent, but always deprived of the most elementary knowledge.

And to diminish that ignorance nothing had been done. Duc Rollon deserved to be blamed, although the tragical story of his life might excuse him. It was to banish *Science*, because the miscreants possessed of its power had perpetrated more mischief in twenty-five years than all barbarian invasions had accomplished in a period twenty times longer.

In the front of the spectators, who dared not advance, Duc Rollon was standing, grave and resolute, deciding to welcome the guests sent by God, whatever should be the consequences of such a momentous event. Bare-headed, he approached Miss Cornell's horse to help her to dismount. The worthy old maid was saluted by the homage of a *baisemain*, which she was far from expecting from a semi-barbaric chieftain. She had, of course, a nice little address ready to be delivered, but, moved to tears, she could only stammer :

“ Oh, my Lord Duke——”

The old man smiled, and, feeling it necessary to explain the real situation at once, he answered :

“ My ‘ dukedom ’ is only a nickname given

to me at a time when we were still in a joking mood."

Aunt Lavinia, regaining her composure, saw her opportunity for a timely quotation, to the immense astonishment of her host, who did not expect to hear himself "thee-and-thou'd" so soon. With the voice and gesture of a perfect tragedienne, she recited :

"Puisque 'Cid,' en leur langue est autant que seigneur,
Je ne t'ôterai pas ce beau titre d'honneur,
Sois désormais le 'Cid,' puisqu'à ce nom tout cède."

Then, dropping a deep curtsy, she added by way of a marginal note :

"Pierre Corneille was my great-uncle."

During this time, emboldened by his grandfather's example, Pierre de Mondeville dared to receive in his sound arm the light weight of the beautiful Edith. Perhaps, after all, he was no longer timid—at any rate he was no longer a dreamer. In a few hours the impossible had, it might be said, dissolved itself as a wall of ice melting beneath the rays of the sun. The goddess had become the woman whom one might touch, hear, and whose subtle perfume could be inhaled. Had he known the art of analyzing—which, thank Heaven! he

did not—Pierre would have confessed that of all his recent discoveries the mysterious power of the perfume was the most surprising. Thus far his nostrils had only known the fragrance of thyme or wild rose.

In the meantime, Douglas Grant presented his companions in simple prose. Duc Rollon made a sign, and some twelve or fifteen men of all ages came forward and stood around him. These he introduced as his sons and grandsons, adding :

“One of them you already know.”

“He has saved my life,” proclaimed Edith, with warmth.

“Ah !” said the grandsire quite simply, “you have been attacked? Have some of those wretches been caught?”

“I took one alive,” replied Pierre, with the same calmness.

The eyes of the old chief threw a questioning glance at his grandson, who replied by an affirmative nod.

Douglas Grant whispered to Islington :

“With us, to electrocute a murderer would require so much fuss before and after. You see, my friend, how many profitable lessons we shall receive from these Normans.”

"Your grandson has forgotten to mention his wound. He is a hero!" added Miss Cornell.

Duc Rollon regarded Pierre with evident satisfaction, but scorned all emotion.

"Here we are all forced to be heroes," he said smilingly; "we have not, like you, some brave men paid so much a month to be fearless."

Then, addressing his guests, he continued: "I am sure that, after so much fatigue, you will be glad to rest. Will you accompany me to the abode which I have had prepared for you? The house is not worthy of you, but it will be your home so long as it pleases you to occupy it."

The travellers crossed the Esplanade, where the approach of night had suspended all work. Fatigue and, still more, astonishment kept them silent. A hundred paces brought them to the dwelling. It was, as their venerable guide explained, the former residence of the land steward. It had been built under Louis XIII., but its original style could scarcely be recognized after alterations which, alas! were not due to the caprices of its owner. The small house, roughly patched

rather than mended, still showed traces of fire and cannon balls. Elizabeth de Monderville was standing on the threshold.

"I confide these ladies to the care of my granddaughter," said the old man. "Pierre, you will look after the gentlemen. To-morrow I will request the honour of your presence at my table. In the meanwhile, may the peace of God be with you."

Elizabeth, unlike her brother, was of neither a timid nor dreamy nature. With a spontaneous and gracious movement, she kissed Miss Cornell and her niece, who, from this moment, no longer regarded her as the semi-barbarian they had expected to pity.

Henry Wagstaff and Warren Islington, according to their respective ages, were contemplating her with admiration. Without seeming to notice it, she extended her hand and begged them to enter.

The walls of the various rooms were white-washed, and were faultlessly clean, as well as the furniture, nearly all of rustic make, in which the hand of a not very adroit carpenter could be detected. In the kitchen a peasant girl was preparing the dinner by the flames of

a big open fire, before which, with her hand, she was revolving a spit.

Aunt Lavinia gave an exclamation of surprise. For a long time the Columbians had used only electric ovens for roasting. By the way, it may be said that, when back at Washington, her first care was to install this primitive apparatus, the remarkable effects of which she had experienced. But this trip was destined to produce some results of much more importance.

A few minutes had sufficed to convince Elizabeth that she was not "an object of pity." Even the intimidating Edith seemed greatly disposed to this adoration which Douglas Grant had predicted. The two young girls, from the first glance, felt drawn to each other, and, strange to relate, the more intimidated of these two widely different characters was not perhaps Elizabeth de Mondeville.

Escorted by the brother and sister, the Columbians visited the little house, and selected their respective rooms. In the meanwhile the luggage was brought, and each traveller took possession of his *butin*—to speak in the language of La Brèche.

In taking leave of her guests, Elizabeth said :

“The two servants whom you have just seen are exclusively at your orders. They will spend the night under your roof, and are ready to obey the smallest request. I hope that a good rest will make you forget all that you are lacking here.”

Pierre added :

“Ladies, you can sleep without fear. You shall be guarded like Queens.”

While speaking he bowed before Edith, and it might be wondered whether the plural number had not been used merely for the sake of politeness. But Aunt Lavinia was not punctilious.

“Were I a Queen,” she said, with majestic grace, “you should be my Captain of the Guards.”

“I have that honour, mademoiselle, and by order of my grandfather.”

“Well, captain, will you and your charming sister do us the honour of dining at the palace this evening?”

“We have not the chief’s permission. Tomorrow we will come to inquire how our guests have passed the night.”

Edith kissed the young girl.

"I am longing for the morrow to see you again," she said. "Thank you for the beautiful flowers which I have found in my room."

"Ah ! at least Nature has been left to us."

Elizabeth smiled in taking her leave, but an observer would have remarked that her smile had nothing cheerful in it.

The dinner, necessarily very simple, seemed exquisite to the elder travellers. The younger ones paid scant attention to it. In their full-speeded life the art of eating as well as the art of loving no longer found a place, and for the same reason—both require leisure.

The historian, more old-fashioned, was profuse in his praise of the quality and flavour of the dishes, adding that in Columbia they knew nothing about such cooking. His daughter, who had not even mentioned politics for several hours, replied :

— "I am not skilled in the culinary art, but I wonder how many hours of work have been expended in the preparation of the dishes? Nobody here knows that the suppression of manual labour is one of the dogmas of Progress."

"Could you make up the list of nonsensical and erroneous dogmas for which we make Progress responsible?" said her father. "As for myself, my faith in some of them has been shaken by an experience of only a few hours."

"Nevertheless," observed Warren Islington, "we spent five hours on horseback to ride eight leagues, we have been attacked on our way, our host does not know what a clock is, nor do they know how to read. We will have to do without our cocktails, our coffee and cognac. Finally, we are eating this dinner, which the professor finds so excellent, by the light of a tallow candle."

"I would have found it still better had this young man and his sister remained to share it with us. How sympathetic they are!"

Douglas Grant proffered an advice:

"Believe me, we must not appear to wish to attract them if we are desirous of prolonging our welcome here. We must not forget that we are like contaminated travellers, put under surveillance. In fact you see that we have been quartered in the lazaretto."

"A lazaretto which might become a prison,"

said Warren. "Duc Rollon, after all, is a tyrant of the worst kind."

"Mais cette liberté, qui vous semble si chère,
N'est pour Rome, seigneur, qu'un bien imaginaire,"

declaimed the collateral descendant of Cornille, who always had a quotation in readiness. "The people here seem to be very fond of their tyrant."

"Duc Rollon has his defects," protested Douglas Grant, "but we are in as great security here as we should be in the White House."

"Heaven keep us from doubting it," said the old maid, quitting the table, followed by her niece.

The men, remaining alone, began to smoke. Warren Islington asked, somewhat appeased :

"How many hundreds of leagues would it be necessary to travel to-day in Europe to find these three noteworthy productions of human genius : a pipe, some tobacco, and a chemical lighter ? Well, we have seen them, the ruined iron bridges, the half-buried rails. Friend Douglas, your idea means a fortune and perhaps the averting of a serious embarrassment for Columbia."

Without replying, the explorer blew some

whiffs of smoke into the air, then said, as though thinking aloud :

“I should like to know where our competitors are who passed us in aeroplane *en route*.”

“There is something more,” said Henry Wagstaff. “I do not find that Duc Rollon looks exactly like an old ironmonger. How will he consider our offer?”

No one took up the question, probably because it was quite just. Besides, they were all tired, and the conversation languished between them. The Professor gave the signal for retreat. During this time Edith and her aunt were busy opening their valises, and, a less easy task, endeavouring to tame the little Norman maid put at their service. Evidently this young person believed herself in the presence of beings possessing not only superior but suspicious power. She fled when her new mistress motioned to her to come near, looking askance at the proffered candies, which to her were objects of an unknown signification. But the poor girl trembled so much that Aunt Lavinia asked this question :

“Why have you come, since you believe that we are so wicked?”

"Because Duc Rollon ordered me to do so," was the unflattering reply.

"And if you had refused?"

"Duc Rollon would have handed me over to the Saboteurs."

"His grandson has defended me against them a few hours ago," said Edith, "but he has been wounded."

"I know," the child replied, already informed of that drama. "Then it was you who looked after Monsieur Pierre?"

Receiving an affirmative nod:

"Oh! in that case, I like you very much."

"That means that you like Monsieur Pierre very much."

"But for him, we should all be lost when his grandfather dies."

"We also like him very much."

From that moment Françoise, for that was her name, was completely tamed.

After extinguishing her tallow candle, Edith went to the window and drew aside the coarse curtains which hid the opening. All were sleeping on the Esplanade save the men on guard watching at a distance around the fire. Nearer, a tall warrior went to and fro in a slow sentry-like walk.

“Guarded like a Queen,” thought Edith. “Were we at home I should put on a cloak and go down to inquire about his wounded arm. But here . . . what would Duc Rollon say?”

CHAPTER X

As may be judged, Pierre de Mondeville could scarcely be styled a "savage," considering the attentions he bestowed upon civilized beings. Early the following morning he appeared at the Hostelry, where he found the Columbians at table finishing their breakfast. He had an envelope in his hand, brought from the *Terrapine* by a messenger during the night. It was a marconigram from Washington with reassuring news for each one.

"I have given directions that, every morning, there shall be a messenger awaiting the orders of the captain of the *Terrapine*," said the Norman.

Glancing at the coarse appointments of the table, he added sadly :

"But perhaps you will not be able to stand our misery, and will go away to-morrow?"

He looked at Edith Wagstaff, who was crumbling a slice of brown bread in her clay

porridge-dish, which was filled with milk sweetened with honey to replace the sugar. To tell the truth, the first morning meal without tea, coffee, or chocolate was telling on the appetites of the travellers. They had with them the necessaries to cater in a better way for themselves; but, on the suggestion of Douglas Grant, it was deemed wiser to accept life at La Brèche such as it was led there. It was at the same time an opportunity for study and a demonstration of tact. Pointing to a beautiful bunch of roses which adorned the table, Edith said to Pierre :

“To be able to offer such flowers as these is to be rich.”

“I saw you when you brought them,” said Aunt Lavinia. “It was early, and the morning dew was still on them.”

“I had just gathered them myself in Father Eustache’s garden. He knows everything, even how to civilize a wild rose.”

Edith exclaimed :

“Who is Father Eustache? When are we going to see him? I am simply longing to know him.”

“And he, too, mademoiselle, is most eager to become acquainted with our guests. Your

visit, he says, may serve as a landmark in the history of the Old World."

"After all, what is the man," asked Warren Islington, becoming anxious—"an explorer—a scholar?"

"No: he is a monk. Three years ago—our friend here had but recently left us—Father Eustache arrived with two companions, the third having been murdered on the way by the most cruel of the Saboteurs belonging to the central region. These intrepid missionaries had walked for two months, coming from over there," and Pierre pointed to the East. "They told us that from a distance they had seen the ruins of an enormous city, formerly the capital of France. For the first time, on that day, while listening to their description, I saw my grandfather weep."

"Do you know who these monks are? I thought religious Orders were extinct with you."

"Yes, they are Benedictines. They will tell you their history. Grandfather put at their disposition an old convent, about half a mile distant from here. They made it habitable, and it shelters now some twenty novices; among them is one of my brothers—growing

corn and even flowers, carpentering, forging, stone-cutting, making shoes and harnesses. They do everything in the Monastery of Champsecret. They rove through the country in search of whatever has escaped the fire. They have a library already."

Pierre hesitated, knowing that he was about to make a delicate revelation.

"I know that I can trust you," said he; "my sister and I have learned how to read and write unbeknown to my grandfather."

Henry Wagstaff had not lost one word of this conversation; he exclaimed:

"How true is the saying of a great philosopher, 'Need creates organs.' The monks sprang up in the Middle Ages, which had sore need of them. And here they are again. . . . But, young man, tell me how the Saboteurs have allowed these priests to live."

"At first it was necessary to practically garrison Champsecret. Little by little, however, the Saboteurs discovered that, when they were ill or wounded, the Benedictines would nurse them and prevent them from being hanged, when it was not too late. Now the gates of the abbey can remain wide open."

"But how is it that Duc Rollon, who is

so much afraid of a reversion to civilized life, does not see that they are commencing to restore it?"

To such a natural question Pierre had a ready answer :

"Monsieur, Father Eustache is Duc Rollon's confessor."

There was a look in the eyes of Douglas Grant and Warren Islington as they exchanged glances which showed that Father Eustache was growing in their esteem. At this moment Elizabeth appeared.

Edith, the dark-haired girl, might have envied her for the golden tresses waving beneath the red toque, beautifully dyed by dint of berries gathered from the bushes : but envy was a sentiment unknown to the young Columbian. Kissing the newcomer, she said :

"Aunt Lavinia, I wish she was my sister."

Faithful to her genealogical tendencies, the old maid replied :

"She is only your cousin. You have both descended from a Norman ancestor."

All were desirous of making a visit to the old manor, scarcely seen the evening before. Following their young guides, they went out on the Esplanade, of which a better idea could

not be given than by comparing it with those Oriental bazaars so often described by travellers of the nineteenth century, except that only a few trades were practised at La Brèche. However, these sons of a hypercivilization, beginning with Warren Islington, felt ashamed of their ignorance. They looked with amazement at a pair of yoked oxen walking round and round a shed in order to draw water from a deep well. Never had they imagined the existence of an animal mill. The constant going and coming of the shuttle, the unceasing action of the hands and feet of the weaver, regular as clockwork, were a wonder. To the citizens of a country where, for a century, all manual work had been more and more suppressed, a blacksmith hammering on his anvil seemed a mythological dream. A potter modelling his clay was no less astonishing.

"Unfortunately," said Elizabeth, "we cannot make glass."

"Yet our house has window-panes," observed Miss Cornell.

"Ah! that is a luxury. Occasionally, from an abandoned house in some lost corner, an intact window-frame is brought to us. The finder knows that he will be generously rewarded."

"Only wait," said Pierre de Mondeville; "we are going to make glass. Father Eustache has promised it. Listen! nine o'clock has struck from the clock in the tower. Thanks to him, since last year it has been in working order. Before that we had only the sun and stars to mark the hours. It is true that to us, who are almost savages, minutes do not exist."

The visitors walked slowly as if, even for them, the minutes had become an imaginary quantity. Besides, it was easy to see that the men, women, and children who composed the population of La Brèche, relatively numerous, ignored the value of time, and saw no reason for hurrying in their work.

"Here the Labour Question is of no importance," observed Edith Wagstaff to her father.

Pierre, who had not lost one of the young girl's movements or impressions, replied:

"The Labour Question has brought us to where we are. You see why my grandfather does not want workmen. These good people surrounding us are impressed with the notion that we must provide them with food and shelter. For those considerations they do

what little work they can, and fight the Saboteurs in case of emergency. As for wages, what would they do with them in a country where there is nothing to buy or to sell?"

Henry Wagstaff, according to his habit, thought much and spoke little. However, he uttered this reflection :

"How curious ! I cannot see what practical difference might be established between the social rôle of Duc Rollon and that of the old Feudal system."

"I am very ignorant," declared Pierre. "However, I have heard it said that the chatelains of the Middle Ages were rather idle. That is not the case with my old grandfather. Our poor people, like clumsy children, come to us whenever they have a difficulty to face. What will become of them when their old Duc Rollon is no longer there?"

"It will be as it was in the old French Monarchy," decided Aunt Lavinia. "Duc Rollon is dead ; long life to Duc Rollon !"

"Ah !" exclaimed the young man, lifting his hands, "you don't know how many sleepless nights I have passed because of that thought. You don't know what a dark, im-

passable gulf I see in my future. The future !
—— But I am forgetting the present. This morning my grandfather has been obliged to go off on horseback, and I have received orders to offer you his excuses, with the hope that you will honour him with your presence at the family repast. Be prepared to see a full table.”

Miss Cornell naturally accepted for all, upon which Douglas Grant proposed returning to the Hostelry to await the hour of the reunion. All followed, understanding that he had some good reason for making this suggestion. Pierre and Elizabeth accompanied them to the dwelling to make sure that all was in good order. Lying on the table in the hall was the envelope which had come from the *Terrapine*. It caught the eyes of the young Norman, who seemed fascinated by the sight of this bit of square blue paper. After a slight hesitation he said :

“If only I dared ! Might I have the permission to take this ? It is something to know how to write ; but if you are lacking paper——”

Edith ran to her writing-case, and, taking out a handful of paper, handed it to Pierre.

"This is for you. I am so happy to afford you a pleasure," she said ; "but I do not give something for nothing. In return, I exact your autograph."

He promised by a sign, and, for the second time in her life, Edith felt on her hand the lips of this pupil who had so much to learn.

This homage appeared to neither displease nor surprise her, so that when they were alone her aunt remarked :

"Really, my dear, you seem to grow pretty well accustomed to it."

The moment had come to decide what should be done with the presents sent by the Emperor ; but Douglas, since he had become better acquainted with Duc Rollon's character, had serious doubts.

"I fear that we have committed a blunder," he confessed to his companions. "I fancied we were coming among savages who could be amused with small mirrors and glass beads. This is the notion we have in Columbia. Whether it is true or not you can judge for yourselves."

"Our glass beads are rather costly," said Warren Islington, who had made out the list of presents. "For the women we have some

silk dresses and jewellery, for the men some watches and some guns, for everybody sugar, coffee, and preserves, to which must be added the more cumbersome goods left on the *Terrapine* until further orders."

"Yes," replied Douglas Grant, "the phonograph, the sewing-machines, the harmonium, and what not? All these are very well to astound poor devils whose lockless doors and paneless windows we have seen in passing through the country. But while we are bringing rays from the sun, the sun itself is kept away by Duc Rollon. When we have left, when the dresses are worn out, and the watches stopped, what will remain of our presence? No progress whatever. Fruit we have given to them, but no seed; and what despair it will be for some of them, if only for that young man and his sister, who have lived in the darkness of night, whose eyes, however, are already opening to the faint gleam of a new horizon."

"Business is business," protested the young scientist. "Must I remind you of the real aim of our voyage?"

"Alas! that aim seems less obtainable since I have learned certain things," replied Douglas Grant.

“Yes, we must deal with an old man who shows a form of insanity never known before. He has devoted his life to the cause of ignorance. Did a tyrant ever live whose memory will be desecrated by a more monstrous crime?”

“Let us admit that Duc Rollon is mad, but are you sure that your mind could have withstood the shock of such catastrophes as he has witnessed?” asked Douglas Grant.

“Well then,” was Warren Islington’s conclusion, “there remains but one thing for us: to pack up our trumpery wares, go back to the yacht and sail for home, to be complimented by Theodore and extolled by the newspapers.”

Henry Wagstaff, the Nestor of the party, gave this opinion :

“Before one of these objects which we have brought are shown to anyone, Duc Rollon must see them. That would be loyal to our host, who has displayed such confidence in us.”

“Bravo, my brother !” approved Miss Cornell. “But is it not time for us to respond to his invitation ?”

CHAPTER XI

THE function was a repetition of the honours bestowed upon Douglas Grant two days before. A trifle confused to find themselves in a family group of some thirty persons, the visitors soon perceived that it lived, with the exception of three of its members, in a twilight barely tinged by a faint after-glow of civilization. What these people had preserved of it, strange to say, was mostly the refinement of an old-fashioned and exaggerated politeness. The Columbians, who were accustomed to a rapid and rather unceremonious way of living, could not but notice the contrast with some astonishment.

Duc Rollon had Miss Cornell at his right, and Henry Wagstaff at his left.

At the other end of the primitive table, between Douglas Grant and Warren Islington, the hostess, one of Duc Rollon's daughters-in-

law, betrayed the distressing embarrassment of a *débutante*.

The explorer had for his neighbour Elizabeth, whom he sincerely admired ; Pierre was seated next to Edith Wagstaff, who was absorbed in taking mental notes for her diary.

Consequently, she talked but little. Only to see her, to serve her, to occasionally touch her dress was such a joy for the young man that he scarcely wanted to hear her talk. He observed with pleasure that, as well for himself as his family, she felt no disdain, still less disgust. She was displaying a fine appetite and every morsel she ate seemed to Pierre a favour conferred, for which he would have liked to thank her. Warren Islington, on the contrary, was carrying on an animated conversation with Elizabeth, who unconsciously showed that the lessons of Father Eustache were those of no ordinary professor.

As for Duc Rollon, claimed by his two neighbours, he could scarcely find time to eat. In Aunt Lavinia's imagination he was like a King. To her brother-in-law he had shown himself as one of the most interesting men that the historian had ever met. The latter, when leaving Washington, had already conceived the

idea of a book which he expected would rank as the first of his works: "Europe during the Second Part of the Twentieth Century." And, as good luck would have it, he found himself seated beside one of the few survivors of the total wreck of a foundered civilization.

When they were on the point of leaving the table, he expressed to his host the eager interest of a scholar.

"I see," said the master of the house, "that you want to hear from an octogenarian witness a relation of events baffling all imagination. I am more than ready to meet your desire. In a moment I will beg you to come to my den where I commune with my sad memories. You are a thinker, I am told. Happy man! You can put down your thoughts and read what others have written. I feel like a man blind and deaf. God spare you a torment which, for me, He has made of a too long duration."

The Columbians learned that day what was a meal which lasted for two hours. At the same time they made the acquaintance in a culinary way with almost every sort of animal, the four-footed, the winged or finned, to be

found living in that part of Europe. Their drink was an excellent cider. As dessert there were not only wild strawberries, but a certain kind of cheese, brought, like the roses, from the Abbey of Champsecret.

Warren Islington declared :

“No such delicious cheese is produced in our factories, where they are made every day by the thousands.”

“The apprentices of Father Eustache do not make more than one or two a week,” replied Elizabeth, smiling. “He has brought here a recipe from his country.”

Once more Douglas Grant exchanged a look with his compatriot, which betrayed their secret apprehension whenever Father Eustache’s name was mentioned.

Pierre de Mondeville continued to devote all his attention to his neighbour. The daughter of a celebrated man, the niece of a Minister, one of the first women elected to Parliament, Edith Wagstaff, as one may believe, little knew what it was to pass unnoticed. Unflattering friends made her understand that she was expected to play a rôle in the public life of her country, and, however modest she might be, she did not pretend to disregard the

pedestal of honour promised to her young effigy. But it was a new and unsuspected pleasure to abandon herself to the adoration of the simple, pure, and boyish eyes of Pierre. It was the first discovery that she had to enter in the day-book of her trip, which, according to her anticipation, was to amuse her with so many strange things. Who could tell how far the field of her present discovery would extend? She was merely curious to see it; at least she thought so, being ignorant of coquetry. She asked herself:

“Is this young man in love or on the point of falling in love with me?” Then she thought: “I will ask my aunt, who knows by heart, so many old romances. But how extraordinary, if he is in love, that he does not appear to realize that I shall leave him soon!”

In fact, Pierre's happiness was unalloyed because, in his primitive soul, the poignant care of the morrow had never, so far, existed. Every moment spent in Eden with Eve's companionship gave him a new rapture. Such was the radiance of the day dazzling his eyes that he had lost all sense of the night which was sure to come. When contemplating an aurora

borealis he had never thought of the darkness which was to follow. Similarly he did not think of the moment when he would be compelled to live without the iridescence of colours, without the intoxication of perfume—without, in one word, Edith Wagstaff!

She alone was the only one of the party who did not notice that they had remained two hours at table. Very quickly the patriarchal tribe separated, each returning to his occupation. The descendants of the old chief were the hardest workers of the country, in the same way that the old feudal lords were the fiercest warriors. Duc Rollon, his granddaughter and grandson, remained alone with his guests. Douglas Grant took this opportunity to draw aside the old man towards the Hostelry, and suddenly expose to his view the presents brought from the *Terrapine*.

“I desire the first thing,” explained the Columbian, “to make sure that these articles please you. Should some not meet with your approbation they will be put aside.”

Douglas Grant did not foresee the stirring scene which he and his companions were about to witness. Duc Rollon sank on a chair, and contemplated in silence the numerous novelties

spread out before him. Then he murmured, clasping his hands :

“So I shall once more behold before I die some of these commodities which we have possessed and would still possess, but for the well-deserved chastisement of God.”

Quitting his chair, he fingered these presents one after another. Some had no meaning for him, and these he handled with the timidity of a well-brought-up child. He listened to the ticking of the watches. He looked with wonderment at the photograph of houses forty stories high. But, at the sight of a picture of an aeroplane carrying numerous passengers, he clenched his fists, and cried out in a vibrating voice :

“There they are, those fiendish machines which in one hour have annihilated fleets, armies, cities ! And there they are, too, those newspapers which have taught the godless workmen how to use Science for the perpetration of evil ! Perhaps you may glorify the one who invented dynamite. But I can imagine nothing cruel enough for him but hell. If one-half of the Saboteurs had not died of starvation before the ruins of their factories, not one honest family would be living to-day. Go,

take back all these diabolical inventions. Why have you shown them to me, only to reawaken smouldering wrath?"

Things were taking a bad turn, all the more painful for their unexpectedness after so many hours of cordial hospitality. Red from anger or pale from disappointment, the travellers dared not look at each other, feeling that one word more would change into defeat the hopes of the expedition. It was Miss Cornell, who, yielding to the impetuosity of her nature, broke the silence:

"Douglas Grant, why have you deceived us in saying that we should be welcomed by Duc Rollon? To work, my friends! Pack up these things, the sight of which has irritated our host! Let us return to our country, and deplore the error which we have committed in good heart and good faith!"

"Ah!" exclaimed the old man, "it is I who need to be pardoned for a momentary weakness! But if only you could understand! If only you could see these visions of massacres which haunt my last days, those bright flames of burning houses illuminating the edge of my grave! Shall I tell you that he who is speaking to you returned home at night with a

handful of brave men, to find his castle ablaze, and his wife dead from fright, while the remainder of his household had taken to the open fields?"

He stopped, overcome with emotion, while tears streamed down his wrinkled cheeks.

"Horror of horrors! It was not the hand of the enemy which had perpetrated such atrocities. The enemy had returned to its native land, recalled by the menace of similar riots which caused destruction to almost all Europe. But France always had the glory of setting an example to the world."

"Thank God, the world has not always followed it to its bitter end," remarked Henry Wagstaff, in a subdued voice. "However, I have never heard that to stop to probe and soothe a man's wound was an insult."

Becoming master of himself, this astonishing old man understood that he had to atone for the impression of an unjust outburst. Resuming his inspection, he showed himself less intractable and less indifferent to the pleasure that his family, especially the women, were going to enjoy. At the sight of some packages of needles, some pairs of scissors, he displayed a naïve joy.

"We know how to weave canvas and cloth. But for cutting and sewing our supplies were rapidly running short. Henceforward they will sleep more contentedly in my house."

After these words he accepted again some other objects, then rose to take his leave. Edith dared to present a petition :

"You would make me happy in allowing me to offer this watch to the charming Elizabeth."

He hesitated a moment, and then, with a melancholy smile, said :

"May I, in accepting it, make you forget the words which you have just heard !"

After his departure Warren Islington gave vent to his indignation.

"Stupid old man. Only with these fifteen or twenty cases brought from the *Terrapine*, life would have been changed for him and for those who surround him. I am astonished, my dear Douglas, that you have not insisted a little more."

"Patience," replied the explorer, "we have set the door ajar. The natural force of events will keep it open."

CHAPTER XII

THE conversation so badly commenced had finished in a happier vein. But the desired results were far from being attained, and Douglas Grant showed plainly to his companions that his enthusiasm was considerably dampened.

"That which we have just seen and heard," he said, "must remain between ourselves. It were better not to have it known at Washington. However, it is urgent to reconnoitre the surrounding territory, and to find out, in a word, if this ubiquitous Father Eustache is a friend or foe."

Just then, most opportunely, Pierre de Mondeville appeared at the hall window, his face beaming with invariable good humour, and inquired if his grandfather's guests had need of his services.

"At every hour, at every minute," replied Douglas Grant. "To begin with, it seems to me, as the head of this party, that I should

pay my respects to Father Eustache. Will you give me the means of doing so?"

"With pleasure. I will arrange the meeting myself. Naturally your first visit must be paid to the Father Abbot, who is less mentioned here, for the reason that he is scarcely seen outside of the monastery. As his title indicates, he is invested with episcopal powers and can ordain priests. My brother will receive Holy Orders in a year. According to Father Eustache, the Abbot is contented to be a saint. The former, when speaking of himself, adds, 'I am too busy to be a saint,' but don't believe him."

Two hours later, Douglas Grant was informed that he would be received at the abbey the following morning, and Castillon would serve as his guide.

Champsecret, in olden times a priory, now an Abbey, was in a half-ruinous condition. Already, by patient and well-conducted repairs, it had been made habitable for some twenty men. Walls in good condition enclosed a large garden surrounding the cloistral residence. La Brèche was less than one mile away.

As had been the case for so many places of the same sort in the Middle Ages, it had

suffered dangerous assaults at the beginning of its new existence. But as already stated, the Saboteurs had found their advantage in its vicinity, from which they had received more than one service. Moreover, it was easy to defend. It occupied the elevated part of a hillock which, on that side, sloped gently towards the river, while the Brèche, giving its name to the castle, ended it on the other side in an abrupt cut. By rather a good comparison, the peasants used to say that the whole resembled a loaf cut in two parts.

On the way, Castillon extolled the marvels which, according to him, were sure to confound with admiration any person visiting Champ-secret :

“You will see wheat as tall as I am, corn surpassing in height that of Monsieur Pierre, apple-trees trained to the wall, beehives resembling boxes, flowers, and plants of all colours and sorts able to cure the patients who come from afar to consult Father Alexis, the gardener and physician to the Abbey. Even Saboteurs are to be seen occasionally in his infirmary.”

“And Duc Rollon does not have them hanged?”

"Once he has passed the threshold of the Abbey the worst desperado knows that his life is safe. For that reason, although the gates are open day and night, never a hen is missing."

A novice, who had been raised* to the position of porter, welcomed Douglas and informed him that the Father Abbot awaited him in the library. The appellation, to tell the truth, was somewhat pretentious for a place where on the shelves could be found only a hundred volumes. But the appearance of the monk, sitting before a shabby desk, showed that he had acquired his knowledge from a richer supply. His broad and expansive brow bespoke a deep mind, in which profound thought was constantly at work. His abundant beard was streaked with threads of silver, and his face, no less than the episcopal cross hanging on his coarse dress, inspired his visitor with a respectful sympathy.

Taking the chair offered to him, Douglas Grant expressed the happy surprise that he felt in seeing a monastery, where he had only expected to find ruins.

"For an explorer like me, it is a sad humiliation to have been in ignorance of the fact that Europe has preserved a religious organiza-

tion in all its integrity. I ask myself how such a miracle was possible."

"The characteristic of the miracle is that you can never declare it impossible," replied the Abbot, smiling. "God had His designs. However, this prodigy can be humanly explained. In the dreariest or most dreadful desert oases are to be found. The undaunted courage of the Swiss citizens, no less than their mountains, have prevented the avalanche of invasions. Moreover, a poor country does not appeal to invaders. But we were not only poor. The nature of our sound race, which is sometimes called slow, is before all judicious and sensible. We have proved refractory to violent strikes, to the intestine hostilities of the social classes, to violent parliamentary demoralization, to religious persecution. Such evils have caused around us disasters which will amaze History. Reduced to ourselves in a small extent of land, deprived of neighbours, life is difficult for us. But we have been able to preserve nearly all the vital functions of a community. The sight of surrounding misfortunes was a great lesson of wisdom."

"The Columbians have learned wisdom at the same school. But what courage you and

your companions must have had to abandon your oasis, and risk yourselves in the desert full of ambushes! I can speak feelingly—I, who have nearly lost my life in some of my explorations.”

“The example of the Apostles showed us our duty. One of us has fallen on the way as a martyr. But it was not a too high price to pay for the privilege of having revived the holy beacon. It was smouldering, but not extinct. These poor people have never lost their faith. It is radiant in your country and mostly to it you owe your preservation. I am happy and favoured to be able to welcome a son of Columbia, blessed land amongst all, since it has given shelter to the ‘Vicar of Christ.’ Ah! ill-fated Rome! who could have believed that of the three capitals of the world—Rome, Paris, Jerusalem—this last would be the one left standing in our days!”

The Abbot closed his eyes as though to dispel a terrible vision, then he asked :

“You have seen Pius XIII.?”

“I have visited him in his little kingdom, on the island which our Government granted him in Lake Michigan. There he is sovereign. We keep an ambassador near him.”

“Are you a Catholic, monsieur?”

"No, I am not. Three of our party—Henry Wagstaff, his sister-in-law, and his daughter—are of your faith."

"The situation of my Church on your continent is well known to me," said the Abbot. "Since last night this monastery shelters an illustrious guest. I have never so well understood until now the wonders of an invention which puts our two countries only two or three days apart."

Douglas Graht repressed an exclamation which had nothing monastical in it. But his face showed something else than pleasure.

"So, then, you do not like aeroplanes?" asked the Benedictine, deceived by the expression of his physiognomy.

"Although much slower, I sometimes prefer a boat. Did I understand that you have as a guest here one of my compatriots who has travelled by air?"

"He is not exactly your compatriot: he is a Canadian and an apostolic missionary. He comes to see if Normandy has need of priests."

"I have heard that you can, and do, ordain priests."

"That is just the answer that I have been happy to give to the Reverend Galerneau."

“ Then he will not remain ?”

“ I hope that he will not leave too soon. He brings us a reflex from the Eternal Light. Besides, he has worldly knowledge. For me and my brothers his visit is the sweetest of consolations.”

“ I suppose he is not alone ?”

“ A young layman accompanies him. His nephew, I believe. But I have scarcely talked with them. Their long journey across our fields and forests has been most fatiguing. This morning they kept their rooms.”

After this information, Douglas Grant was less desirous of protracting his visit at the monastery. However, he made it a point to see Father Eustache. A short conversation sufficed to show him that this monk was a real savant, and would be a match for Warren Islington, whose visit was announced for an early day.

At the gate of the monastery, Douglas Grant met Edith, who seemed in a furious temper. She was accompanied by Pierre de Mondeville, who was receiving the storm with submissive equanimity. Questioned by her compatriot she answered :

“ Could you believe that they have shut

their door on me under the pretext that I am a woman? It was useless to tell them that I am a Member of the Columbian Parliament. As well speak to a stone! The only favour accorded to me is to enter the dispensary where everybody is admitted."

"Since you are a Catholic the regulations of the convents for men should be known to you," timorously pleaded Pierre.

Douglas Grant sided with the young Norman.

"Ah, Miss Wagstaff! were I the Captain of the Guards, I should declare that the monks, by keeping you at a distance, acknowledge your power. It is a compliment from them, and perhaps our legislators who admit you in their ranks show you a less flattering confidence. . . . But I must return to the Hostelry. Please excuse me."

Henry Wagstaff and Warren Islington were awaiting his return, curious to know his impressions.

The younger of the two, who boasted of being neither Protestant nor Catholic, with a bored and disdainful air, said :

"Well, what have you found interesting at the worthy cowl-wearers'?"

"What have I found, my dear fellow? That which you do not suspect. I have found our Canadians making themselves perfectly at home, and nursing their lumbagoes."

Warren Islington uttered an exclamation which could be vainly sought for in the Psalter of the Abbey. As to the professor, he seemed almost amused.

"Do you remember," said he, "what my brother told you twenty times? Elzear Turcote is an old fox who knows more than one trick."

"He is a genius," corroborated Douglas Grant. "Can you imagine the idea he has conceived? Do you know what man he has sent to contend with us? A priest, travelling alone with his breviary under his arm. A cassock was the best passport in this country of faithful believers."

"Of faithful believers? You make me laugh," exclaimed Warren Islington. "They have cut the throats of the curés and destroyed the religious buildings which have not naturally crumbled down as a result of legal abandonment."

"It is easy to see that you have never read seriously the 'History of the Church,'" said

the professor, with a slight shrug of his shoulders. "But how has this Canadian priest been able to escape from the clutches of the Saboteurs?"

Douglas Grant proffered an explanation.

"The peasants whom he met on his way defended or hid him. In their opinion it was a sacred duty. There you must admire the foresight of Elzear Turcote. Besides, the Reverend Galerneau—that is his name, a name very Norman by the way—is accompanied by a layman, his nephew, or so-called. You guess, I suppose, that this pious acolyte is some Government engineer who will soon be in close friendship with the dear Father Eustache, while his venerable relative will talk theology with the Abbot. Do not fail to go and see the latter as soon as possible, Mr. Wagstaff, and be sure that Duc Rollon decides nothing without his advice."

With his head in his hands, the professor meditated. Finally, he declared :

"My friends, the more I think of it, the more I conclude that we have made a mistake. It is not savages we are visiting, but men of the Tenth Century. Perfectly ignorant, scattered over a country too spacious for their

numbers, they are remaking the history of the feudal period by instructive evolution. You see, the monks are already there. What Cluny has been after barbarian invasions, Champsecret, on a minor scale, is commencing to be for the survivors of less ancient disasters. The process of the human race never changes. It surges in its flight, falls to the ground, and rises again for different reasons and by various means. But all that is the result of an immutable law which might be defined : ‘ Progress, and the hopelessness of the infinite in Progress.’ ”

CHAPTER XIII

THIS serious conversation was interrupted by the noise of animated feminine voices. Aunt Lavinia, who had gone out with Elizabeth de Mondeville, had met her niece and Pierre at the door of the Hostelry, where the hour of luncheon was the signal for bringing together the Columbians. Miss Cornell, to whom it seemed impossible to exist one hour without a subject of enthusiasm, was returning transported with admiration by the number as well as the discipline of the servants, both male and female, who were swarming in every corner of the castle.

She was the first to speak :

“ My parents used to tell me that, in their young days, it was not an infrequent occurrence for them to be obliged to wait on themselves. Later on European immigrants, fleeing before the tempests, inundated our country with

servants seeking employment. They have left abundant descendants of would-be-domestics who are unable and unwilling to work, still less to obey. As compensation they are insatiable in matter of wages. Young man, I shall endeavour to obtain your grandfather's permission to make a choice among his retinue. Never can I forget that enormous kitchen and its population of scullery boys and maids, who seem to be there merely for their own pleasure."

"Indeed, they are there for something more," replied Pierre. "To eat their fill, to sleep beneath a roof, and to be protected against the Saboteurs, is quite enough to satisfy their ambition. No formal tie exists between them and my family. We do not owe them a thing. Born and grown up at La Brèche, they expect to die there. The instinct of submission in them is merely the instinct of self-preservation."

"My friend," said Henry Wagstaff, "you have just explained unwittingly the origin of feudal serfs."

"How much good one might do them!" sighed Edith Wagstaff.

"Each minute spent near you makes me

realize it," said Pierre de Mondeville. "But we must go, my sister; when one has a watch, exactitude is obligatory."

Elizabeth glanced at the tiny dial with a childish delight.

"Ah!" she cried, "my dear watch! How I love its giver."

With a graceful movement she kissed Edith's cheek and followed her brother in the direction of the château.

Warren Islington appeared just as the smoking and appetizing soup was brought to the table. He too had a report to make:

"For one hour I have been admiring the handicraft of the marvellous fellow who forges horseshoes. It took him just twelve minutes to make what our machines would turn out in twelve seconds. But I defy you to find in all Columbia a man able to achieve such a masterpiece by the means of a clumsy hammer, a shapeless anvil, and a small piece of red-hot iron. Really, I expect we shall discover most unexpected wonders here. Don't you think so, Miss Wagstaff?"

More thoughtful than was her wont, Edith answered:

"I have already discovered this infinitely

curious thing, which is called 'a man young and happy.'"

Warren Islington protested :

"I will not assert positively that I am happy. Felicity for me could exist only in the solution of all problems. But young I am, thank God."

"You are not young, nor I either. I feel older than Duc Rollon since I have been in frequent intercourse with his family."

"Friends," avowed the scientist, "our fair companion has turned pessimist. No doubt she is growing homesick for the assembly-room of the Washington Parliament."

She shrugged her shoulders and continued to eat without speaking. Her eyes still saw the face of Pierre, suffused with beatitude caused by her presence, and expressing the genuine ecstasy which he did not think of concealing, still less of declaring.

For hours he had followed the apparition, to quote him, heedless of the fact that there existed on this earth other cares, other duties, and other ambitions.

As for her, recently escaped from the Columbian rush, it was a fascinating contrast. Never until that moment had she been so

struck, almost frightened, by the strength of the feminine power which does not need to be established by the vote of citizens, nor by the debating of a Bill.

In the meanwhile, Warren Islington continued to speak without noticing that Edith was no longer listening.

“If, for a nation, to be young is to be destitute, then this one may indeed boast of its youth. This morning, in walking over the neighbouring country, I trudged for miles without coming across any house or hut. When I did see one, it took its daylight from an open door or from windows without panes. I could see that the dwellers slept on straw, and made their own earthenware.”

“What does it matter about their earthenware?” observed Douglas Grant. “Their food is better and more copious than that of our poorest classes.”

“Well, they have farming land enough, and cattle, too, if you can call cattle herds of half-wild sheep, grazing and multiplying at their convenience. But one is absolutely bewildered by the quantity of fat and chubby youngsters swarming about the scanty homes. People here don’t follow the example of their

unprolific ancestors, who at the time of the final cataclysm, had lost one-third of their numbers."

"Yes," affirmed Henry Wagstaff, "it was one of the causes of their downfall. But let us look out. The increase of a race is in inverse ratio to its welfare. It is a strange but constant law. For that reason, notwithstanding that millions of Europeans fled to Columbia at the time of their massacres, our population is now at a standstill. What we have gained on one side we have lost on the other. And that same law accounts for the number of children which is a surprise to you here."

"I admit it. But how explain their return to superstition?"

"Retract the word!" exclaimed Miss Cornell, who was a fervent Catholic.

"I retract at once. But, nevertheless, by whatever name you are pleased to call the conduct of Frenchmen in religious matters, one of their last acts was to suppress worship and everything pertaining to it."

"It was not the work of all Frenchmen," corrected the professor, "but of that part of the nation who were in power at the time.

At all events, I agree with you: if not unbelievers, they were certainly indifferent when their priests numbered an army. Now there are no more priests, and their—dévotion is enough to gladden Miss Cornell's heart. On every house you see a coarsely-painted cross. In one of these miserable abodes which I entered, the head of the family, surrounded by his kin, was dying from old age. In saying his farewell to them, he was more calm than we were when parting from our friends on the pier at Washington. While gently weeping, those who were to be left behind advised him to have a talk with St. Peter, and secure a corner in Paradise where they could huddle together. That is the condition in which these men are, whose fathers have not left a stone standing of the most beautiful monuments of religious art."

"My dear Islington, be sure of one thing," said Miss Cornell, "the coming generation will build new cathedrals. But our friend Douglas Grant does not follow the conversation."

"Well," said the member called to order, "your conversation is drifting far away from

the main object of our trip. You have discoursed upon manual labour, large families, religion, etc. . . . Do you ladies remember the time when only one thought was absorbing our attention: 'Shall we outdistance the Canadians?'

"Well, we arrived before them," said Edith.

"Yes, we were the first to enter the suburbs. But they have been holding the heart of the city—I mean the Abbey—since yesterday. It is there, most likely, that the question which made us take this trip will be decided."

Douglas Grant continued to relate the little he knew concerning the Reverend Galerneau and his acolyte.

"But," objected Miss Cornell, "after all, what do you know about this Canadian missionary? Perhaps he cares for nothing but the salvation of souls."

"Well," said the explorer, "I imagine you might learn a good deal on the subject from the caller who is knocking at our door."

Looking through the window, they beheld the tall and slim outline of a monk, middle-aged and alert, clad in a coarse black frock

girded with a leather strap. Douglas Grant hastened to open the door to the newcomer, and shaking his hand, he announced :

“ Father Eustache, the miracle worker, who restores life to a dead country.”

The Benedictine’s smile showed that he did not mind a joke.

“ For the moment,” he replied, “ I am only a poor monk sent by his Superior to present his compliments to Duc Rollon’s guests. If you, gentlemen,* will do us the honour to come to see us, our Abbot will be delighted. As for the ladies, if agreeable it would be possible to give them an interview outside our cloistral limits.”

A silence followed, during which the Columbians scrutinized a physiognomy deprived of exterior protection, for Father Eustache was clean-shaven. It was a surprise for the travellers, who, since their disembarkment, saw for the first time a masculine face without a beard.

Miss Cornell, always impetuous, could not restrain this remark :

“ I have heard that in the whole Norman territory a razor could not be found.”

“ Ah, mademoiselle, many things can be

found on Norman territory, when one takes the trouble to hunt for them."

Those words startled his listeners. From them it might perhaps be suspected that the object of Columbia's mission had been scented out; but Father Eustache continued to smile the same as he would have done at a child's sally.

In addressing Henry Wagstaff he became serious.

"Our Abbot," he said, "gives much study to history. He anticipates an unusual interest in his meeting with the most distinguished professor of the New World. As for myself, before entering the Order I was a poor pupil of one of our decayed schools. I shall listen with both ears open to the lessons of the man who is walking in the footsteps of Edison."

As he ended this phrase he bowed towards Warren, who replied:

"I knew that Father Eustache is a magician: to be so well informed about us he must be gifted with second sight."

"Shall I establish still further my reputation of seer? Then I will tell you that Miss Wagstaff is the best-listened-to feminine orator

in the Columbian House. But I derive my knowledge from a less prodigious source. Canada is bordering your Empire, and by luck we have as our guest at this moment a prominent member of the Canadian clergy."

"Shall we see him at last?" asked Douglas Grant.

"He would have accompanied me to-day had he not been so fatigued from his journey. As for myself, I am at the disposal of the travellers drawn to us by the desire of contemplating our ruins."

"To that wish is added another," affirmed the explorer. "We have desired to do some good to this country, but Duc Rollon refuses our gifts. However modest they may be, they would be useful."

"You are hitting a difficulty which, between ourselves, is a cause of some uneasiness to me, since it hinders my efforts. To have become a hater of civilization you may judge to what extent the poor old man has suffered. My greatest trial is to be obliged to deceive him very often."

"Ah!" exclaimed Miss Cornell, "for that deception I have already admired you. To lift his grandson and granddaughter out of

their ignorance by stealth—what a splendid action !”

“ Alas ! I commit other acts of duplicity. Fortunately, my venerable and obdurate friend never enters my laboratory, which, could you believe it, is daily becoming a ‘museum enriched by the aid of the Saboteurs. In the ruins of the cities where they have fixed their abode those descendants of an ill-fated race find now and then relics of the past which we can employ. When they require a remedy or need to be cared for, they come to the Abbey, and, in return, show their gratitude by some present, which you might deem of questionable edification ; but the right of prescription is admitted by theologians.”

Edith Wagstaff protested.

“ Allow me to tell you that I am especially interested in the working-men’s condition ; so I don’t like to hear them spoken of as the forefathers of the Saboteurs. Is not that a summary way of judging the Labour question ?”

“ The Labour question does not exist, mademoiselle, or rather it is a question of good sense. The concept of the workman has for its correlative the master, who pays wages, and who ought to pay them in just proportion to his

profits. How could men even below average intelligence expect reduction of work and increase of wages simultaneously and *ad infinitum*? They expected it, however, because such nonsense was put in print every morning under their eyes. Such was the origin of strikes, which, for the workmen, beyond a certain extent, were a form of suicide. It is for that reason Duc Rollon will not permit his people to be taught how to read. 'The danger of Science is a question more difficult to solve than the Labour question.'

"Or rather," said Henry Wagstaff, "good sense is the only power able to settle questions on which the existence of a people depends. Thank Heaven! The Columbians have kept their good sense. Montesquieu, the contemporary of Louis Fifteenth, predicted the end of Europe in these words :

'Some nations have fallen from the summit of Civilization to ruin and servitude for having lost control of themselves during two generations.'

"But," asked Edith, "what then, in your opinion, will the future be for these miserable people who live around you, to say nothing of the others?"

“ Duc Rollon will not live for ever, mademoiselle. His grandson, who is a remarkable young man, will play a rôle in the resurrection of old France. All my efforts are tending to prepare him for such a destiny.”

“ This was our wish,” added Dóuglas Grant. “ In order to construct new buildings we have brought some considerable stone.”

“ May I see it ?”

For the second time, the presents which had met with such a bad reception the day before were displayed. On this occasion there was a less hostile welcome. Father Eustache exclaimed with delight :

“ What treasures you have there !”

“ Yes ; but these treasures must be taken back with us to Columbia, by order of the chief.”

“ Bah ! treasures are made to be carried off . . . and in my museum there is still a good deal of space,” said the Benedictine, smiling.

“ You are not afraid that Duc Rollon ? . . . ”

“ He retires at an early hour . . . and there are no bolts on the door of the Hostelry. All I ask of you is, please, to sleep a little sounder during the next night. And we will pray God *pro benefactoribus nostris*.”

CHAPTER XIV

ON the following day, whilst the masculine part of the expedition directed their steps towards the Abbey, Edith Wagstaff, invited by Pierre, quitted La Brèche for a stroll in the environs. He had told her :

“I should like to show you a devastated shrine which I have begun to repair by myself.”

“Why don’t you make use of Father Eustache ?”

“You will decide, I think, that it is not the affair of a monk. Your aid will be much more useful. But wait until you have seen it.”

After passing through the gate of the castle they descended the path which led to the bottom of the narrow gorge where the harmless little torrent was trying to roar. Turning to the right, they followed its course up a gently rising path among wild mint, which filled the damp shade with its wholesome and pure fragrance.

Above their heads, clinging to the precipitous cliff, old wych-elms, already mature in the past days of "La Belle France," raised their slender trunks, so smooth that even ivy could not drape its green mantle on their polished surface. Abandoned to itself for three-quarters of a century, the forest towered over an impenetrable underwood. Nature, free from human intrusion, gloried once more in her eternal and exuberant youth.

Man, being so scarce and unarmed, was no longer a terror for the animals. Squirrels did not flee from Edith's white dress. She herself was startled now and then, when the strident signal of a whistle was heard almost under her feet. Then, from a cluster of reeds which her garment had brushed, a swift arrow, resplendent with ruby and emerald, shot into the water. It was a kingfisher, unexpectedly disturbed from its nest.

The narrow path obliged Pierre to walk in advance, but every ten paces or so he would turn his head for no other reason than to see his companion, and each time his face betrayed the radiant joy which this vision caused him. Amused, she could not help saying : ..

"Don't fear, I am coming."

"If you were not coming I should know it at once. I should feel your presence even though I were blind."

A small cascade streaked the path with water, which shone beneath the moss. Edith stopped and hesitated. Pierre, turning his head, said :

"Oh, I beg your pardon! I have been heedless of your dainty shoes. They are no more made for our roads than you are made for our life." •

Without further speech he slung his rifle over his shoulder and carried the young girl for a few paces. It was a simple and rapid action, but when he had deposited his light burden, he stood still for a few seconds and closed his eyes. That was all, and no man ever less deserved to be blamed for having taken an undue advantage. Edith, however, was thinking of their return. She was not one of those who find amusement in such rescuing experiences.

"You ought to build a foot-bridge over this little stream," she said, sure that Pierre de Mondeville would understand.

In truth, he did understand. Placing his rifle against the rock, he picked up some

stones and arranged them at a small distance apart, thus securing a dry passage. Edith deemed that this submission deserved a reward. Taking out her camera from its case, she photographed the young man, who was absorbed in his work. The image, which was in colours, appeared immediately, and was a perfect likeness.

The time had gone by when it took hours to develop films and plates. When it was finished she handed him her work. He contemplated it first with amazement, then with a mysterious desire, which showed itself in the sudden veiling of his clear eyes. At last he paved his way by the following question :

“ I suppose,” he said, “ it takes a long time to learn how to photograph ? ”

“ A long time ? ” exclaimed Edith ; “ in a quarter of an hour you will know as much as I do.”

Only the half of it was necessary to make of him a promising pupil. Satisfied with his instruction, Pierre de Mondeville seemed in a hurry to continue the walk.

A few minutes brought them to a widening in the granite wall, forming a circular excavation where human hands had hewn out a niche.

A sort of altar had been made in this mass, formerly surmounted by a statue, fragments of which could be seen half hidden in the thick and tall grass.

"This is my shrine," said Pierre.

Edith Wagstaff, having examined the pieces of sculpture, replied smilingly :

"Ah ! I see, your saint was a lady, and her attire a little profane."

"You are right, and it was not a saintly man who erected the monument. This is the story : All the Seigneurs of La Brèche have not led exemplary lives. At the end of the Eighteenth Century one of them lived in this solitude with an actress of remarkable beauty, who had forsaken the fame and pleasures of Parisian life for him. She died prematurely, and, unable to console himself, he had her effigy put here, and, according to the legend still existing, would spend whole days contemplating her. It is for that reason that the spot is called 'Love's Grotto.'"

"I understand now," remarked Edith, "that it would be rather difficult to count upon Father Eustache's help to restore the shrine."

"Oh ! I have restored it in imagination. I forgive those who have broken the statue.

This empty altar is well fitted for me, whose life will be always empty. As an outcast, who must not even be called by its name, Love has taken refuge here, with me as his only companion. For years I have visited 'my sanctuary' when my duties allowed it. Here I have dreamed of those times when women could be found beautiful enough to be mourned for during a lifetime. Like my ancestor, I was shedding tears over beauty. But to me beauty was something destined to be for ever unknown . . . until a few days ago."

Edith looked at him without apparent emotion, less troubled than surprised. She honestly wished to dispel the illusion due to his inexperience :

"Your ancestor would not have erected a statue to me. I would not have been 'beautiful' for him, who had been able to make comparisons. Beauty is a relative thing. The most perfect creature *alone* on earth would be neither beautiful nor ugly."

"You mean that I have not been able to compare? That is true. For me you are the only real woman living on earth. But don't try to make me believe that any other more

beautiful than you has existed since the creation of the world."

"You talk like a boy of eighteen. Do please be more serious. One could say that beyond this . . . futile thing, life has neither interests nor duties for you, and yet you have a hard task before you. Do not forget that you will be another Duc Rollon for the coming generation of this people, after your grandfather's death."

A laugh full of bitterness escaped from the young man's breast :

"Wait until you have visited our desert for a few days longer. You will ridicule the very idea of calling us a people. But, be assured, I will do my duty. Do not fear that you have made it harder. Before knowing you I had divined that women unlike ours were in existence. Then you came replacing my haunting dreams by the reality. Every minute I spend in your society represents one year of happiness. So, when you go away, I shall be as a man who has lived to a very old age and regrets his youth, but did not expect to keep it for ever. Tell me, do you think I talk now like an eighteen-year-old boy?"

She answered with tears in her eyes :

“I have never heard such words before. I admire you as I have never admired any human being. Where have you learned such sublime thoughts?”

“Voices speak to me when I am sitting on that bench. But henceforward another voice will speak to me in ‘my sanctuary.’”

He hesitated for a few seconds, then, with a confident fervour, these words came from his lips :

“You might very easily replace the image of the unknown beauty on its pedestal?”

“How could I?”

Without speaking, Pierre pointed to the camera.

“Very good!” said she. “It is my turn now, and I will never pose with a prettier background.”

Throwing her hat on the grass, she climbed to the mossy stone. In the severe folds of her white dress she looked like a statue, but in her eyes there was a warm, living light, that no sculptor has ever been known to give to his marble. Instinctively she chose the best posture, her left hand hung by her side while the other was extended fully open as though ready for a friendly pressure. Guided by the

directions of his professor, the pupil produced a masterpiece. He asked with a voice full of emotion :

“ May I have this picture ?”

“ Of course ; but are you not afraid that the other lady will be jealous ?”

“ No : this place was waiting for you. The other one had usurped it,” answered Pierre.

He kissed the camera before putting it back in its case. It was his way of thanking Edith. Between them the silence became strained. She broke it by saying, as though having mistaken the gesture :

“ Yes, it is a wonderful invention. Even Father Eustache himself could not do what you have just accomplished. Will you tell him this story ?”

“ Not now. He will hear it the day—if it ever come—when I shall join my brother at the monastery.”

“ Grandson of Duc Rollon, you have not the right !”

“ Alas !” sighed Pierre.

And he remained silent until the moment when they separated on the Esplanade.

CHAPTER XV

WHILE Edith and Pierre were teaching each other a science thus far unknown to them, two conversations were taking place at the monastery—one between the Abbot and Henry Wagstaff, the other between Father Eustache and Warren Islington.

Four years had barely elapsed since on a certain winter's evening three jaded, half-starved, half-frozen friars knocked at Duc Rollon's door. Dumbfounded to learn that they had come on foot across the whole space of France from a convent located in the Grisons Mountains, the old man had knelt to receive their blessing. The following day he made them relate their adventures.

The human race was then passing through a deadly crisis. Many men, having lost all worldly hope, had sought a refuge in the Swiss cloister, still standing. For that reason a small swarm had deserted the overcrowded hive and

followed the sun, without knowing where, some day, they might settle. Like their predecessors of old times, these apostles had walked straight on, preaching the Gospel wherever they happened to find listeners. But, for them too, on their way, martyrdom had been lying in wait.

Four in number at their start, they were but three when reaching La Brèche. Saboteurs had assassinated one of their brothers, whose black frock was for them a sufficient accusation against him.

Even had the ocean not barred their way, the Benedictines would have yielded to Duc Rollon's entreaties, who put at their disposal a priory, or rather, the ruins of a priory, of their Order. By accepting, they felt that they were obeying a command from heaven.

Perhaps, some day, God's hand might bring them into communication with that distant shore to which St. Peter's bark had transported the head of their Church, holding in his hand the sacred light, still burning.

"You know, perchance," concluded the Abbot as he finished his narrative, "that the hoped-for miracle has happened. We have at this moment a holy priest as our guest, who

has seen with his own eyes the Sovereign Pontiff, and heard with his own ears his infallible voice. No one can understand the happiness which fills our souls."

The Benedictine relapsed into silence, wrapped up in his meditations of thankfulness. Henry Wagstaff must be pardoned if his thoughts were more terrestrial—"To think that the longed-for miracle has come to pass, because one of us conceived the idea of utilizing a stock of old rails!"

Aloud, following his thought, the professor asked :

"You don't expect without doubt to limit your efforts to spiritual beneficence?"

"To do so would be to overlook the traditions of the sons of St. Benedict. Unfortunately, we have arrived here with only our breviaries by way of a library, and our rosaries by way of implements."

"Important remains of civilization are still existing."

"After two or three scores of years? Very seldom these remains can be put to use. Nevertheless, the wretched creatures who surround us already know the way to the monastery. They sometimes bring to us an object which

Father Eustache can turn to account, for, besides his general knowledge, he has made a special study of civil engineering. In short, it seems that a few green shoots can be noticed on the old decayed tree."

"And you are already numerous at Champ-secret?"

"We should be too numerous if all the postulants were admitted, a mistake which was made in the Middle Ages. Now, as then, the despondent and hopeless human being turns his eyes towards God."

"Are not these terrible words? Are you not putting forward a difficult dilemma—Progress without God, or God without Progress?"

"No," answered the Abbot; "on this edifice, dismantled and discrowned, there is another dilemma you must learn to read—Progress with God, or the bottomless pit without God. It was not his ministers who have told the people: 'Annihilate employers and companies by your strikes, obliterate all industry by your *sabotage*, bring about the bankruptcy of the States, and when the enemies have come to save their investments, when they have retreated with booty, then will be your moment to set to work and use scientific means of destruction

to level to the ground everything that is standing, either material or immaterial !' Oh, what a terrible verdict of Divine Justice ! The victorious invaders returned home, only to find themselves involved in the same catastrophes which had served as a motive to their invasion. But who is responsible for it ? Not the priests, you will admit. They had been hunted, exterminated, like wild beasts, years before."

"You are speaking to a believer," said Henry Wagstaff. "I am glad to say that even before the terrific lessons of the last century, we Columbians always ignored the sectarian hatred of religious principles. That is why we are still standing. But for me, who have spent my life in studying and writing History, what a discouraging question : 'Of what use is Science ?' "

"Science," replied the Abbot smilingly, "is a magnificent thing when all goes well on earth."

"Yes, but when everything goes wrong a handful of men, with the help of Science, in a few minutes, completes the work of destruction, which all the invasions of the barbarians have not been able to accomplish."

"My dear professor, let me tell you that what you have seen is a mere nothing in the

matter of destruction. The inhabitants of this country ought to be thankful that they have not witnessed the last big battles, which remained undecided for the simple reason that everybody was dead. They have not seen whole provinces dying from hunger because the railroads no longer existed to bring them food. Shall I tell you that I and my brothers have walked for entire days among scattered skeletons? Once, from the top of a hill we have discerned a lake, out of which huge piles of ruined walls were emerging. The Seine, obstructed by fallen bridges, had caused the lake. The ruins . . . were the capital of France!"

The two men remained silent. For these great thinkers the future of civilization, deprived of its secular torch, was a distressing abyss of darkness.

The Abbot broke the silence, and, divining what was passing in the Columbian's mind, said:

"As you know History, it has shown that France never dies. Civilization has found a refuge on your continent. You will give it back to its birthplace, and it will be the same civilization, because it will have kept the stamp of Christianity."

"Who knows if we shall not see the Crusades again?" asked Henry Wagstaff.

"The Crusades have never ceased. In former times religious, later on they became political. The conquest of India by the English, that of Africa by the French, were of an economical and industrial order. But see how the ground lost by the Cross has been regained by two religious forces. The ardent Islam faith has retaken the African continent and even expanded itself into Spain, thanks to their arms being more efficient than the Mohammedan scimitar. Buddhism is reigning in Russia and India . . ."

"And in a part of our old territory," added the historian, sighing, "Christ, Buddha, and Mohammed are still dividing the Empire of the world among them."

"Christ will be victorious," affirmed the Abbot.

"In the meantime, if one must believe Duc Rollon, the man who knows how to read is apt to lose his good sense. But the one who does not know how to read is but half a man. When then shall the True and Just Voice be heard?"

At this moment, a bell sounded in the belfry of the little chapel.

"This," said the Abbot, "is the voice you desired to hear. It calls us to prayer. Permit me to take leave of you with the hope of seeing you soon again."

Between Father Eustache and Warren Islington the conversation, naturally, had taken another turn. The monk had been made acquainted with the ordinary pursuits of the young scientist. In consequence, he took him at once to a shed where novices were taught (such were the words used by the guide) how to make something out of nothing. It is easy to imagine what was, on one side, the admiration of a man who had never seen a blacksmith forging a horseshoe, on the other the simple pleasure of the one whose life was passed in combating obstacles.

He explained as they were walking :

"Here is a lathe which, since last month, is in working order. It was necessary to make it by filing, which is hard work. But first it was necessary to find some files, and so on."

"We will leave with you all the implements which the *Terrapine* can spare," promised the Columbian. "Already you have—we won't tell Duc Rollon—paper, pencils, and pens. You will have some compasses, vices, screws,

and pincers. But we have arrived too late. Once the lathe is working any machine can be produced. You don't need us any longer."

He reflected a little, and then, with an assumed candour, he turned aside the conversation :

"You are well supplied with raw material, I suppose?"

"You mean iron and steel? Oh! I have some men digging among the ruins in order to gather the small iron from the gratings and bits of chain. But these riches are diminishing around us."

Islington judged that the time had come "to put out a feeler:"

"There remain the rails of the old tracks and the débris of the metallic frames."

"Great minds run in the same channel," said Father Eustache, with perfect candour; "not later than yesterday Monsieur Le Moussu emitted the same idea."

"Who is Monsieur Le Moussu?"

"A stranger like you, but not a compatriot. He is a Canadian, who came by aeroplane from Quebec with his uncle, the Reverend Galerneau, apostolic missionary."

“ Really, I should never have believed that you needed missionaries to convert you.”

“ Alas ! we are not perfect. However, such is not the principal motive which led this worthy priest here. The Canadians have remembered their Norman ancestors. They send to us a dignitary of their Church, who has spoken several times with the Pope in his little insular kingdom of Michigan. Thus, the miracle sought for by us has been produced. Our links with our Spiritual Ruler are tied again. He knows of our existence and our needs. A singular coincidence ! Almost the same day that your Empire sent human science to this desert, Canada sent us God's aid.”

“ Indeed, the coincidence of visits is very curious, but no more so than the coincidence of ideas. Shall I have the pleasure of meeting this Monsieur Le Moussu ?”

“ When you wish. Do not expect to find in him anything more than natural wit and good humour. His conversation is not that of a scholar. But his pious demeanour is highly edifying to us when he joins his uncle at the night celebration of our Divine service. Shall we continue our walk since you seem interested ?”

Warren Islington was interested indeed. In one hour he was retracing the steps of civilization in its advance since its swaddling clothes. Lay brothers were hammering ploughshares on anvils made of a fragment of cast-iron. Others were modelling* clay vases for which a kiln was ready, built of bricks of best refractory quality. The Columbian noticed that a large quantity of these bricks were in fabrication, and wondered for what use.

“You will see some day*to what use I intend them,” said Father Eustache.

They went through an armoury shop where modern rifles were turned into flint guns.

“A curious way of understanding Progress !” remarked Islington.

“What would you expect? I have some flint but no *fulminate*. As to the powder, that is child’s play.”

“Ha, ha ! my Reverend Father, I believed it was written in your canonical Institute : ‘*Ecclesia abhorret à sanguine.*’”

“Be assured, my guns are destined for the secular arms of a little garrison which protects us against the Saboteurs.”

“Undesirable neighbours !”

“Yes, it is the last wave of the tempest

which has left nothing standing. But if you wish to realize what was the rage of the internal fight, observe that the rare survivors, persecutors and victims, are not yet reconciled."

"Then what will be the end of such an abnormal struggle, between the wrecked crews of two opposite vessels drifting on the same raft?"

"It will be, let us hope, the conversion of the Saboteurs, but still more, alas! their natural extinction. Their infants, few in number, rarely reach maturity. Dreadful diseases decimate the adults. These also, it must be added, are hunted to death by the peasants, who have become less afraid of them. It would have been impossible for you to set foot on British land, a hellish pandemonium, where the Saboteurs are absolute masters."

"What causes that difference, in your opinion?"

"The cause is that, in the last period, England's population consisted entirely of workmen—there were no peasants. Another reason is that her door, for more than a century, has been opened to the scum of all foreign countries."

"It is curious," observed Islington, "to hear

you speak exactly as my friend Douglas Grant spoke in the Emperor's Cabinet."

The bell interrupted their conversation at the same time that it terminated that of the Father Abbot and Henry Wagstaff.

"Return soon," said the Benedictine. "I will make you acquainted with Monsieur Le Moussu."

CHAPTER XVI

THE professor waited at the door of the monastery for his companion, in order to return together to La Brèche.

"Well," asked Islington, "what impression have you brought away? As for mine, only the hunter's pride who does not want to return home with empty hands prevents me from saying: 'Let us go away!'"

"You will go away without me," replied the old writer, "for every day I spend here I am collecting the materials for a book, which will be the most curious ever published in Washington since the foundation of the Empire."

"Yes, but we have come to collect materials of another sort. Douglas Grant has promised us millions and millions of tons of iron. That was a grand idea. Only he was not counting on the unexpected."

"You mean the Canadians?"

"I mean much more—I mean Father

Eustache ! But don't worry, the Canadians won't have the old iron, and we shall not fare any better. The Benedictine will not allow one ton of the rusty metal to be taken away. He knows its value. Nevertheless, our friend, Elzear Turcote, has well chosen his ambassadors."

Warren Islington related what he had just learned on the subject of Le Moussu, the good boy of limited knowledge, whose sole object was to watch over the precious life of his uncle.

" You surmise, as Douglas Grant and I also do," he added, " that under the disguise of a devoted relation, punctual at Matins, you find the cleverest civil engineer of Canada. But clever or not, he will be forced to go home empty-handed, and that will be our consolation."

The Columbians were soon congregated around the table. Douglas Grant returning from a walk ; Edith from an excursion on horseback with Pierre de Mondeville ; Miss Cornell from a visit to Duc Rollon. She was the one who seemed the readiest to give an account of her morning.

" I have vainly urged this old man, admirable

but pig-headed, to open a school. 'We have had only too many schools in France,' was his answer, 'whose pupils, profiting by the teachings of their unworthy masters, have burned down our libraries and thrown down our statues, among them that of your great-uncle.' I have promised to give him my copy of the 'Cid' which never leaves me."

When Douglas Grant was able to talk, he gave a brief résumé of his morning's experience. •

After finding on an old map the location of a big viaduct, formerly crossing the ravine some two miles distant from La Brèche, he decided to go and survey the condition of the metal left to rust for fifty years. Starting unaccompanied lest any suspicion might be aroused, armed with his revolver in case of emergency, he had little trouble in discovering the spot. A splendid piece of workmanship had been there, the result of so many schemes and efforts, destroyed in a few seconds by a cartridge or two of dynamite. Hurlled down from a high level, the huge trestle-bridge was lying, bent and distorted like an empty tin preserve-box, a distressing picture of fiendish devastation. But upon approaching nearer, one was able to

discover in its whole extent the horror of a ferocious deed, surpassing all imagination.

An engine with a wreckage of cars was lying among the ruins of the track. In all certainty the perpetrators of the catastrophe had waited to accomplish it for the moment when a train should cross the span.

Although acquainted with such sights in his previous trips, the explorer stood motionless, struck with horror. How many hundreds of men, women, and children had been killed, belonging to the lower classes like the monsters who had caused their death. Involuntarily his eyes looked for their skeletons, perhaps already returned to impalpable dust. So, he thought, at the same time that Science was opening the aerial dominion to the aviators, it was lending its power to a host of criminals ready to stop the history of the world on a continent.

Suddenly the explorer descried a cross made with a trunk of unwrought oak, dominating a regularly shaped mound. A single word, *Ossuary*, could be read at the base of the holy symbol. "This is Father Eustache's doing," thought the visitor, quite correctly. But the Benedictine's work was not confined to

showing respect to the dead. It was easy to see that this sinister spot was frequently visited for a material purpose. Expert hands had commenced to sort the metallic fragments which were not too heavy to be moved. Separate piles of iron, brass, steel, and cast-iron, carefully selected, were ready to be taken away.

Douglas Grant's attention was attracted by the presence of a living being, whom he took at first for a Saboteur, but he was not long in uncertainty. 'The stranger, his costume showed him as such, was taking notes. Judging by the examination to which this enormous quantity of useless metal was submitted, these notes could not have been those of a simple tourist.' Not for one moment did the Columbian doubt. This little bearded man, absorbed in making his estimations, could be none other than one of the aeroplane travellers surveying the affair upon which they were bent.

Hidden behind a thicket, Douglas Grant did not intrude. The man looked at his watch and, putting his note-book in his pocket, took the direction of the Abbey, never suspecting that he was being followed. When he had walked a hundred paces or so

his unsuspected companion, anxious to make his acquaintance, joined him. At the noise the Canadian turned his head and, with a natural suspicion of a Saboteur, aimed his revolver.

"Please, sir," shouted Douglas Grant, raising his hands, "spare yourself the remorse of having bagged a quasi-compatriot. Unless I be mistaken, I have had the pleasure of seeing you before—from a distance. I was sailing my boat while you were flying 2,000 feet above the sea-level. My name is Douglas Grant."

"Ah, the celebrated explorer! Charmed to meet you. My name is Le Moussu and I cannot compete with you, for I have quitted the soil of our Republic for the first time."

"Judging by your start you will surpass me some day."

"You flatter me. My only rôle is to take care of my uncle, a missionary sent by the Patriarch of Quebec to visit our unlucky brothers in faith and common origin."

"It seems to me just now that you are giving the slip to your uncle."

"He is among good friends. After I had served his Mass he gave me a holiday until the midday Angelus. As I am no good in

finding the cardinal points, I was afraid of being lost in my walk."

"It was directed towards a gruesome spot."

"Dreadful, sir!—dreadful! especially when one comes upon it unexpectedly. Do you think malevolence caused this tremendous wreck?"

"I am afraid it did. But it was enough to see how you cocked your pistol to be sure that you are not ignorant of the existence of the Saboteurs—and their tricks."

"Please excuse the blunder of a greenhorn. Father Eustache has warned me to be on my guard."

Arrived at this point, the good young man forgot all else to extol the existence of the monks' passing their lives between prayer and work. Douglas listened while laughing in his sleeve. On the division of their paths they parted, charmed with one another, and with a promise to meet soon again.

Such was the explorer's story to his companions. Someone noticed that Edith's thumb was tied up; questioned, she replied:

"During my ride this morning I saw a peasant producing light from a fragment of flint, which he knocked with a piece of steel.

I tried to do the same thing, but instead of striking the flint, I struck my fingers ; here we are but inferior beings ; it is humiliating, but none the less true."

"You were not alone, I hope?" asked Henry Wagstaff.

"Pierre de Mondeville was with me."

To that trifling episode she limited the account of her morning. According to her habit, she went up early to her room to collect her notes, briefly worded—mere indications, in fact, for further developments. This is what she wrote in her diary :

"Labour Question : A problem which is found everywhere, to be defined thus : a conflict between the workmen whetted by knowledge in their aspirations as well as in their appetites, and Society enjoying itself at the top of prosperity. It is because it has not been able to conciliate these two interests that old Europe, etc.

"Feminism : I have just seen a six-footed fellow on the point of fainting because he noticed some blood under my finger-nail. An ultra-sensitive nature, curious to study. Would be just as unable to live in our country as a lamb to pasture in the streets of New York.

But in a community composed of such men, life would be charming for us. It has existed in the Eighteenth Century, when women were lulled in a sweet reverie on soft and flowering thrones. Compare those women, who did nothing and ruled men, with us, who are making ourselves equal to men, nothing more, by an unceasing struggle. Where is the true feminism?

“Love: A favourite sport of old times. It does not render one stronger or more alert, but may be agreeable, one is inclined to believe so, for men ignorant of business (and of clocks). No wonder if these idlers exaggerated its importance, believing in good faith that it holds ineffable bliss, irremediable misery, and that it may cause the most extreme determinations. Definition . . .

“Well, it is too difficult for a Columbian girl of the Twenty-first Century. However, I have a faint idea of what it has been in past generations. An interesting morning, all in all. . . .”

What had been the “interest” of that morning will be better understood after reading the following account of events which had marked its course.

CHAPTER XVII •

THE first hours of the day had been spent in the most enjoyable ride over roads which could no longer be called roads, except for their hedges, pink with honeysuckle. Nature, unfettered from man's servitude, was resplendent in her calm and solemn beauty. All sorts of animals, free and fearless, had reconquered their empire, from which their hereditary tyrant had retreated. Not a winged artist was missing at the concert, which, like an envious rival, the blackbird hissed outrageously. In a remote bush the peerless soloist was modulating its sweet and sonorous love-song. Edith reined up to listen.

"Never," said she, "have I heard anything so beautiful!"

Pierre looked at her, happy at heart because, to her in whom all was admirable, he had succeeded in affording something to admire. However, he dared to show his sur-

prise, not unmingled with a touch of boyish pride :

“ I am sorry for you if you do not have nightingales in your home.”

She answered rather confusedly :

“ Probably we have them, but we have no time to listen to their music. Life is only too short for the useful pursuits which fill every hour.”

“ I suppose that in your eyes I must pass for the most useless of men. Don't be so hard on me. If only you could see how I spend my days when you are not here ! No doubt you are of great use to your fellow-creatures. To mine I am something more. They could not exist without me. Whatever your work may be, it is a trifle as compared with mine. Forgive me for being so bold.”

“ I forgive you. But then I blame you for wasting so many hours in my society. Duty passes before everything else.”

Pierre was not too embarrassed to defend himself :

“ Each moment spent near you enables me to do my duty better, so it is not time lost. You are teaching me everything of which I am ignorant.”

"For instructing you I am not equal to Father Eustache."

"You are much better. Before you came I sometimes felt discouraged by his science, like a child facing a too difficult task. I wanted to sit down and cry. Now, it seems to me I could sing like that nightingale. I fear nothing, except to displease you. Nothing will be impossible with an always present thought in my mind: 'Were she here, I could read in her eyes that she is contented with me.' Henceforward solitude will no longer exist, since I shall live with the memory of you . . . of you, who will forget me so soon, when once your duties will claim you again."

"If work is conducive to oblivion, which of us will forget the sooner? However strenuous my efforts may be, the result is not always obvious. You, on the contrary, can measure and weigh every night the harvest of your day."

"That is what I hear from my friends of Champsecret. They assure me that some time thriving villages will grace our country. I sincerely believe that the monks are preparing for this revival, but only in part. Since I met

you I am engrossed with the notion. I commence to understand what miracles feminine power can work. Alas ! monks will help me, but the other help I shall always miss. See the effect of your presence on these poor people who are staring at you as at a royal apparition. Don't you feel that they would like to come near and kiss the hem of your dress ?”

“What is a poet ? I don't know. And I don't know why I, too, would like to touch the hem of your garb with my lips. Is it sinful idolatry or is it love, about which I have read in some books ? Love ! It is unknown here, like silk, or like the perfume which emanates from your presence. Would it be absurd to think that I love you ? But, before all, am I capable of it ?”

Edith did not seem to find the idea absurd.

“You are capable of a great love,” she answered in a sincere voice.

“If so,” said he, with sudden resolution. . . .
“But do you still wish for my autograph ?”

“Most assuredly ; I have asked you for it. I began to think that you had forgotten your

promise. You have had the time to fill several pages with your autograph."

He shook his head in contradiction. On the paper which he produced from his breast his heavy and patient handwriting appeared, resembling the penmanship of an old charter. Only three words had been traced, which no man had ever found the time to write for Edith :

He was no more timid than while praying before the picture of the Madonna, and no more was he expecting an answer ; but the eyes of the young girl remained fixed on the short phrase with an enigmatical expression. Mistaking the cause of such a long study, he asked :

"You find it difficult to decipher these words written with a too unskilled hand. How many times you must have been called upon to read these same lines better written !"

"Never," she replied softly. "It is like the song of the nightingale. This morning you have made me know two things of which I was ignorant."

They rode a long time without speaking.

Pierre tried to imagine what stuff these men living beyond the seas were made of, who, at the sight of such an adorable creature, could help expressing their feelings. Finally, he asked :

“Perhaps it is not permitted in your country for the young men and young girls to live side by side?”

She replied :

“On the contrary, we live too much side by side. We share the same duties, the same occupations, the same ambitions. We are like racers hurrying to the same winning-post, which men are not always the first to reach. To stop to pick up flowers is impossible.”

“Then of what use are your gardens?”

“To grow flowers which are sold to the men who have dined at my father’s table. The roses are sent to me with a few words of thanks. With the help of the telephone it takes only one minute, but neither the thanks nor the flowers occupy my thoughts for one second.”

After having weighed carefully his words, Pierre put this question :

“But you will marry some day?”

“So will you,” she replied rather harshly.

“Will you write to your fiancée, ‘Je vous aime’?”

“She would not know how to read it.”

“Well, my fiancé will not know how to write it. The result is the same—you and I, we will have to do without love, that is all.”

Such was the “interesting morning” which was mentioned by only two words in Edith’s note-book. She had nothing in common with the “belle Pensierose” of the Twentieth Century, built on the model of her aunt, whose note-book had enough in a single page to furnish a delectable chapter to some lucky novelist. However, when she had written her memorandum, she laid down her pen and fell, if not to dreaming, at least to meditation. But her meditation was not centred on the Labour Question, which, in her estimation, should be her speciality in Parliament.

This mental process was interrupted by Aunt Lavinia seeking for a little chat as a diversion to a monotonous afternoon.

“You are bored?” said the old maid. “Of course, all of us are more or less disappointed in this trip. Admit that you are sighing for Washington.”

With an assumed lightness of mind, Edith replied :

“Why should I be disappointed ? I came to seek the unknown amongst the barbarians of the Old World. Now I take away a curio of an old civilization that our Columbian existence, you more than anyone will admit it, could never have procured for me.”

She drew from her portfolio the autograph received in the morning, and handed it to her aunt. After having read it, the romantic old maid joined her hands with reverential emotion.

“Ah !” she murmured, “were it not a profane quotation from Scripture, I should say that you are ‘blessed among women.’ How did it happen ? How I wish that I had witnessed the scene. . . . But my presence might have upset this poor fellow.”

“On the contrary, you would have been very useful. My lover is the most loyal of men. Before placing his paper in my hands, he wanted to be sure that it was not a spurious draft. But how could he make sure that the impression caused by my presence is really—the thing his pen mentioned ? We have examined the question together. Neither of

us is very qualified to judge ; whilst you, who have read so much——”

“ Oh, what delicious naïveté !” exclaimed Aunt Lavinia, enraptured. “ It reminds me of a romance I used to sing when I was young, in the days when people still had time to sing. Very likely Mozart knew more on this subject than Pierre de Monderville.”

With a quivering but pleasing and tender voice she sang softly :

“ ‘Peut-on me dire si c’est l’amour ?’ ”

Then she seemed lost in her memories.

“ What was your answer when he handed you this declaration ?” she finally asked.

“ My answer ? I am curious to know what yours would have been. Would you have said : We will not leave each other ; the *Terrapine* shall depart without me ?”

“ Perhaps not ; only I should have let him read some pity in my eyes. . . . But how dangerous ! What if he had insisted upon following me ?”

“ And his duty, dear auntie ? For he is not free to obey the caprice of a moment.”

“ That is true. Honour chains him to his

country, of which he is the sole hope. It might be believed that my great-uncle wrote for him that lamentation of baffled love :

“ ‘ Impitoyable sort dont la rigueur sépare
Ma gloire d’avec mes désirs ! . . . ’ ”

Poor children ! God will help you to forget. It is splendid, however, to love for a life-time, without hope, like the Royal Princess loved Rodrigue, whom she could not marry.”

“ I do not promise you that my life will be a long martyrdom. But I commence to realize that it will be in reality stupid. It is an impression that I shall take home with me—together with his autograph.”

“ Ungrateful girl ! Won’t you give that young man at least the consolation of hearing you say : ‘ I am sorry I came, because when I go away, grief alone will remain after me. ’ ”

“ Ask Pierre if he regrets it ! ”

“ Then you admit that his heart is nobler than yours ? ”

“ I admit it willingly, auntie.”

Modesty is an excellent virtue.

CHAPTER XVIII

NOTHING, either seen or heard, could divert the attention of Warren Islington from the secret purpose of the expedition. Naturally, being a scientist, he was constantly appealing to Science for success. Each hour passed with Father Eustache augmented the friendship between these two men, as much as a friendship could exist between a monk and a free-thinker. It would have been hard to decide which of them felt the more admiration for the other. Their minds, bordering genius, made a complete whole. Unlike his visitor, however, the Benedictine found a pleasure in disclosing his projects, already carried out on some points. It was a pleasure unmingled with pride. With the simplicity of his nature he liked to surprise Warren Islington in the results he was attaining by more than inadequate means.

One day he invited the Columbian to take a walk to this same viaduct in ruins which

Douglas Grant had discovered ; but, being disturbed in his meeting with Le Moussu, the latter had not extended his excursion upstream as far as the dam of a mill destroyed by the Saboteurs. These, in all probability, had regretted "the flour furnished by its millstones in former days.

No less than the explorer, Warren Islington was struck by the sorting of the metallic wreckage. More competent than Douglas Grant, he asked the monk :

" I understand that you will make use of iron and copper. But how will you deal with cast-iron, it is too much for a hammersmith ?"

" A little patience," replied Father Eustache smilingly : " the answer will present itself."

Arrived at the dam, the scientist could not restrain a cry of admiration. The carpenters were reinstating the sluice-gates of the paddle-wheel ; close by a mason was building a small turret shaped like an overturned bottle.

" My fabrication of refractory bricks astonished you the other day?" said the Benedictine ; " you understand now ?"

" Yes, you are constructing a smelting furnace ; and the hydraulic power will set the blowing machine in action."

“And we shall cast all sorts of things, from saucepans for the housewife, to gear-pieces for the steam-engine, which we need in my workshop. We do not have to go far to find charcoal. From here you smell the acrid smoke of the kilns. If God but gives me time I will train pupils who, little by little, will establish some industries; and this country will once more see its factories.”

“Now, I doubt nothing: all is possible with you. However, for regenerating Europe, could you not find more prompt means? A single voyage of the *Terrapine* could bring you so many necessary objects, which, in the hands of a man like you, would gain half a century towards progress.”

Less learned in psychology than in science, Warren Islington had not foreseen the effects of these words on his pacific host. Father Eustache was a pious monk, but a man after all, and impassioned for his material work. So he could not be enchanted with the idea that his almost superhuman task should be accomplished as though it were mere child's play by a newcomer. Was he going to suddenly fall from a rôle of creator to that of a head clerk, managing a branch establishment for importa-

tion. It was perhaps to deceive himself that he found a well-chosen argument :

“ Do you not think that before regenerating it is necessary to populate ?”

“ On this last point, the future can inspire confidence,” replied Warren Islington. “ The Norman race is prolific ; it has shown itself so in Canada. In your solitudes often one journeys for a long time without finding a house. But when it is found, it is overrunning with sturdy ‘ kids.’ They won’t be fewer nor weaker when the abode of their parents bears less likeness to the hut of the savage. By that I don’t mean giving them telegraph and newspapers. But one might at least provide them with window-panes.”

“ We have already obtained a product bearing some resemblance to glass,” the monk announced, his eyes glistening. “ But supposing that you would send some window-panes, how should we be able to pay for them ?”

“ With your old rails and iron frames,” replied Warren Islington, unmasking his batteries.

Unmoved, Father Eustache, pointing to the building of the smelting-furnace almost completed, simply said :

“It is better that our old iron frames and rails are regenerated here. A day will come when these ‘kids,’ as you call them, will not have sufficient metal to fill the needs of their industry. We have not the right of depriving them of their inheritance.”

“You are reckoning at a long range, my Reverend Father. ‘A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.’ I had counted on you to interest Duc Rollon in my idea.”

“Duc Rollon? I keep out of his sight all work appertaining to Progress. He is pleased to have me when it is a question of erecting a wooden bridge over a river, or tanning some hides for his shoes. But you know by yourself that, to take your presents to the Abbey, we were obliged to profit by the night. Trust me, do not mention your idea to Duc Rollon. And never tell him, please, that we have nearly two hundred volumes in our library. The Father Abbot himself would not dare to boast of it.”

“That is madness!”

“Young man, thank God that you never saw what Duc Rollon has seen. Perhaps by now you would be shut up in an asylum.”

So it appeared that even Science coming

as an ambassador from the Emperor Theodore was badly listened to.

In the meantime another voice, that of Religion, was trying its eloquence on the venerable ruler of the Abbey. It was the first time that the Reverend Galerneau had broached openly the object of his trip.

“When I came here,” said he to the monk, “I expected to find a few families lost in this solitude, having forgotten, together with human knowledge, the light of faith, deprived of all sacerdotal ministers. Judge of my happy surprise to find, in the midst of this chaos, the sons of St. Benedict already employed in establishing God’s reign.”

“The successors of the Apostles have never completely disappeared from Europe,” replied the Abbot. “Almost everywhere, from time to time, they could be seen passing, crucifix in hand. Here we have been able to do something better. The Christians of our infant Church are thrilling with the zeal of the first ages. They live and die like saints. I refuse novices by the dozens. But for the vicinity of the Saboteurs I should have already established a convent for nuns. But we have nothing which resembles a police, save some hideous

summary executions which we are trying in vain to suppress."

"Can it be believed then that Duc Rollon is quite converted?"

"Pardon is a difficult virtue, and this austere nobleman would have much to pardon. Moreover, he deems himself entitled to self-defence."

"He would be better defended if he could organize a militia. He is needing arms in the same way that you are needing sacred vessels and linen for your altar, and statues for your sanctuary. But your sanctuary must be rebuilt. We should be able to help you for all that by sending you sculptors and painters, and then the Abbey would be worthy of the glorious traditions of the Order. And you, most eminent Abbot, who knows what recompense the Sovereign Pontiff, our neighbour in his island of Lake Michigan, might bestow on the renaissant Church of Normandy in your person?"

The Abbot gave vent to an unconstrained burst of laughter.

"A Cardinal's hat! *Vade retro!* My mitre of plaited straw and cross of oak are enough for me. When you have an audience with His Holiness, please say to him that the humblest

of the monks of Champsecret asks for his benediction. We should be able to pay for this blessing by our prayers. As for the other benefits which you are displaying before me so temptingly, we are too poor to settle for them.”

“You poor? What a profound error! Do you not know that several mines on the other side of the globe are being exhausted, and that iron is becoming a precious metal. Now, a whole fleet might be loaded with the old iron I saw as I crossed the country coming here. If only Duc Rollon will permit us . . . his duchy will become something more serious than a nickname.”

The objection presented to Warren Islington by Father Eustache came naturally to the lips of the Abbot.

“‘A poor crown for a sovereign without subjects!’ Our first Canadian colonists came from Normandy—in return Canada could very well send some here.”

The Abbot shook his head without replying and closed his eyes, as if to reflect upon the words which he had just heard.

“Bear in mind,” he said at last, “that we are the guests of this old man, whom you

know very little. In the mind of this venerable patriot the independence for which he has shed his blood is surpassing all other interests. How often he has told me : ‘ I prefer to see my country a miserable desert than to have it thriving and luxurious beneath the yoke of a foreign ruler.’ Receive some colonists ? You know as well as I that it would be opening the door to the conquerors coming from the New World. Were it suspected that I am even favouring such an idea, be sure the Abbey would become tenantless very soon.”

The Reverend Galerneau made sure that there were no eavesdroppers, and then unfolded the mystery of the mission sent by Elzear Turcote.

“ My rôle is not for temporal affairs. I am not fitted for such, but my companion is the bearer of a formal treaty between the Canadian Republic and the Duke of Normandy, acknowledged in such quality as reigning Sovereign. That treaty would protect your surly host against all attempts to an annexation.”

The Reverend Galerneau watched the effect of his words, then added in a low voice :

“ And even against Columbian intrigues, which, you will admit, present circumstances

no longer allow you to consider as a mere hypothetical chimera."

"I was not prepared for such overtures," pleaded the Abbot. "Give me time to reflect. But to whom could I report this conversation? Duc Rollon is very old, his grandson is very young. My, my! I never expected to become Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Benedictines have not furnished one in the whole course of History."

"They have contented themselves with producing forty Popes. But it is time yet. Why shouldn't you be 'Eminence Grise' . . . en robe noire?"

"I wonder what 'Père Joseph' could have done with the Seigneur of La Brèche for Sovereign, and his army as an instrument. Before going farther, permit me to invoke the light of the Holy Ghost."

"I will unite my prayers with yours, my worthy Abbot."

With this pious conclusion the two priests separated.

CHAPTER XIX

THUS far it looked as if Elzear Turcote was to outdistance Geoffrey Wagstaff in their diplomatic race. But each group of negotiators, less enlightened than the indulgent readers of these pages, was living in painful ignorance of its rival's progress. So to the fear of their own failure was added a feverish uncertainty of the other's advancement. In fact, the only contact between the two parties had been the accidental meeting of these two adversaries, worthy of each other, Douglas Grant and Le Moussu.

"I have never in my life seen a man play the part of simpleton to such absolute perfection," the Columbian had asserted.

In spite of their keen desire to know the Reverend Galerneau, the Washingtonians had not once seen so much as the end of his nose, even from a distance. One day Le Moussu, driven into a corner by Warren Islington,

declared that his uncle was making a retreat at the Abbey, and never left his cell except for the conventual services.

"I almost always accompany him," he added. "Nothing in the world can equal the solemnity and beauty of midnight Matins. You ought to witness the spectacle."

"I believe you on your word," replied the scientist. "But are you not afraid that the Saboteurs will demolish your aeroplane whilst you are chanting psalms? Should such a mishap occur, the *Terrapine* will be put to your orders to take you home."

"Thanks so much for the obliging offer. But Duc Rollon has the aeroplane guarded both day and night."

"No doubt you will leave soon?"

"As to that, only my uncle could tell you. For myself, I love the independence and quiet of this new life. I dare say it pleases you as well as your companions?"

The affirmation was a trifle exaggerated, perhaps, except for Edith Wagstaff. The hours seemed long at the Hostelry, the distractions offered having lost their novelty. One day came when the question was discussed in council if the prolongation of their stay were

advisable. Douglas Grant, discouraged, hesitated. Warren Islington, furious at having lost his time, was moving for their departure. Against all expectation, Miss Cornell seconded this opinion without giving any reasons for the cooling off of her enthusiasm. Henry Wagstaff, interested by the numerous subjects of study, seemed less hurried to say adieu to the old continent. His daughter supported him with all the power of which she was capable, invoking arguments of high politics to oppose a retreat.

"Now," she said, "we are at a point when national honour is at stake. Are you going to abandon the field to the Canadians, who, between ourselves, have had the better of us so far?"

Warren Islington answered:

"That is the very reason why we must leave before being invited to do so. That would be scarcely flattering to our national honour. As hospitable as Duc Rollon may be, he might make us understand that we are needed in Washington. Besides, I have noticed lately, when meeting him by chance, that his manner is cooler."

"I have had the same impression," de-

clared Miss Cornell, without explaining further.

"Please remember that Duc Rollon is eighty years old ; and, moreover, you are all forgetting that he has an heir-presumptive," said Edith.

Henry Wagstaff, always ready to admire his daughter, upheld her by his authority of an old professor :

"It cannot be denied that you will find many cases in History where diplomacy carried a treaty by opposing the future Sovereign to the reigning Monarch."

The two young men remained silent, perhaps because "diplomacy" was represented by one of the persons present. Miss Cornell shrugged her shoulders and pronounced this judgment :

"In the Normandy of to-day the future Sovereign is a boy who knows nothing, and trembles in the presence of his grandfather."

"He does not tremble when it is a matter of risking his life !" retorted Edith, her eyes flashing. "Your opinion about him has changed considerably since we arrived. Then you said, when speaking of him, that he was 'a hero.'"

"But, after all, what do you pretend to do ? To use him to counterbalance the Canadian influence ?"

"I am more ambitious for him than that. Pierre de Mondeville must be the instrument to save and regenerate his people. ' My idea is to instil the love of my country in his heart. I have already made him understand that we are not vultures, contending with other birds of prey for the possession of a carrion. Father, tell me if this is not a higher grade of diplomacy than that of the Reverend Galerneau."

"Most certainly," admitted Henry Wagstaff. "But, above all, it is a diplomacy of a wider range. It is worth while to ponder its possible results. I think we should regret it, were we to decide the question of our departure too quickly."

So the motion of Warren Islington was adjourned. Everyone saw that Aunt Lavinia was making an effort to keep silent, although she might have a good deal to say. But she had pledged herself to secrecy by a promise given, and a collateral descendant of the author of the "Cid" could not but share the sentiments of her granduncle on honour and duty.

Just as the sitting was raised, Pierre de Mondeville appeared. To tell the truth, if he had ever deserved to be pictured as an ignorant boy, the portrait had lost its likeness. In his deeper and more serious look it was no longer possible to detect the thoughtlessness of youth, and nobody, unless he were blind, could fail to notice in it the fire of passion. But Henry Wagstaff, so farsighted in finding his way in the labyrinth of History, was not so well gifted when it was a question of his daughter.

Addressing himself to Edith, the young Norman, according to his daily habit, suggested an excursion.

"I have wanted you for some time to see Father Alexis's garden, but he wished to trim his rose-trees and clean his flower-beds before having your visit. To-day he is waiting for you if you care to come."

Before the young girl had time to reply he evinced his good breeding by adding :

"I regret very much that it is too long a walk for Miss Cornell."

A somewhat sulky motion of the head showed that his politeness was not appreciated to its full value. But what could the aunt

say so long as the father made no objections to these long promenades? Less than ever did he think of doing so now that diplomacy was brought into play. What would his brother the Premier have thought?

The garden of the Abbey was in reality a sort of agricultural school on a diminutive scale, situated outside the claustral enclosure. On one side it was connected with the monastery by a door, always kept shut. Towards the country it was entered by a gate, which for more than a year had remained open day and night.

The venerable gardener greeted his friend with the jovial smile of a man living in close companionship with Flora and Pomona. But he soon, and unconsciously, too, displayed the science of a consummate naturalist, blended with the attractive simplicity of a St. Francis of Assisi. Everything in Nature roused his admiration and won his tenderness. By patient study he was restoring fruit-trees and vegetables from their wild condition to a state of perfection. There was already a delicate flax replacing coarse hemp, and along a well-exposed wall he was cultivating some grapevines.

When speaking of the exterior world, he showed his unconcern by a smile, in which peace was unmixed with disdain. No doubt Pierre had informed him of the rank which Edith held among her citizens, and of the social task in which she was interested, for, on approaching a thatched shed, he asked :

“Mademoiselle, are you completely satisfied with the manner your country is governed ?”

“Far from it,” she replied ; “but where can one find a perfect Government ?”

“I will show you one,” said Father Alexis. “Let us open that hive ; you will see a model State founded on labour, obedience and duty appointed to every citizen.”

In a few words he described the wonderful instinct of the bees.

It was less the lecture of the savant than the fond gossip of a father praising his family. In fact his *mouches* seemed to love him and enjoy his presence. He spoke to them as to his children :

“Come, say *bonjour* to mademoiselle ; but don't forget that God gave you your sting for a lawful defence, not for an unjust attack. . . . Don't be nervous, my child ; extend

your hand: they will walk over it like friends."

Pierre was bold enough to add that the walk would be a beautiful one. Without replying directly, Father Alexis smiled a trifle maliciously and said:

"There is one psalm of David which I prefer to all the others. It is the one in which he calls upon all the beauties of Nature to praise and magnify the Lord. But, in this enumeration, the sainted King has not included the beauty of women."

His two listeners remaining silent, the monk continued by way of consolation:

"The Holy Scripture says elsewhere, however, that the price of a virtuous woman is far above rubies."

He fell back on the rôle of a plain gardener doing the honours of his domain. It was easy to see that in him there was a peace above all understanding.

"Father, I envy you with all my heart," said the young Columbian.

"Why, my child?"

"Because you are completely happy."

"Alas! *no*: the devil tempts me. Twenty times a day he shows me how much I am

lacking . . . seeds, tools, plants. . . . If ever you should make another trip. . . . Don't laugh at me ; I know well that such an unsatisfactory experience is not tried twice."

"Who knows?" replied the traveller. "Christopher Columbus made a second voyage to America after having discovered it."

She glanced stealthily at Pierre de Monderville, who had become suddenly pale.

They arrived at the exterior door of the garden just as a miserable human creature, breathless, ragged, half-mad, rushed through. Peasants hard on his trail were pursuing him with deadly clamour. By a majestic motion of his hand the monk stopped the obedient crowd on the threshold.

"Keep back !" he thundered ; "this man no longer belongs to you. What is your complaint against him ?"

"He has carried off a lamb," screamed one of the most furious of the pack.

"And you want to hang him for that ?"

The peasant hung his head. A rope ready for use left no doubt as to the verdict which had been pronounced against the unhappy Saboteur.

"Be off !" ordered the gentle monk, becom-

ing a St. Léon before Attila. "You do not deserve the name of Christians."

"And you," addressing the man, ready to sink with terror, and bleeding from the cuts made by stones, "come into the infirmary."

The monk left, supporting the wounded man with his strong arm. Edith quitted the garden, trembling with emotion. Pierre followed her in silence, ashamed of the scene which in a few minutes had shown such poignant awakening of savage instincts. After having walked for some hundred paces, the young girl stopped.

"Is it true," she asked, "that you love me, and that I am a Queen for you?"

With a long sigh, he replied :

"Why do you ask me useless questions?"

"If you love me," she continued, "I exact a promise."

"Is it to love you always?" he asked, the light of enthusiasm and faith shining in his eyes.

"I know that you will love me always : but I do not wish to be loved by a barbarian. Swear to me that these hideous executions shall be suppressed. What ! You exterminate a poor,

starving wretch, because he has stolen a lamb, and you call it justice?"

"To-day it was a lamb, to-morrow it will be . . . My heavens! Have you forgotten the prey they wished to seize? It makes me shiver with horror to even think of it. If these brutes cease to fear us, we are lost."

"Is it possible that you do not understand that you are falling to their level? Be strict in your punishment, but judge first."

"We do judge in a summary way. Do you expect us to have in this simple desert magistrates in black robes, with a code which these wretches could not read?"

"Cruel man! Your code exists; only it contains but one penalty. Any conscientious being is a good magistrate. If the culprit must die, at least let him defend himself."

"Grandfather would never consent to it."

"I have heard this reply only too often. Duc Rollon may not live much longer. Since, after him, it is you who will have the care of his people, it is your right to insist on this, as a first step towards the light of Civilization which I have pointed out to you, to quote your own words. When you are master, do you intend to follow the same course—forbid

children being taught to read, and the houses being protected against cold and rain? Oh! Pierre, what a sublime task will be yours some day!"

For the first time she had called him by his Christian name. It was too much even for the strength of this indomitable man, whose eyes filled with tears.

"How I wish I could die before my grandfather!" he sighed. "You speak of a task to be accomplished. Heaven! of what use is your intelligence? When I see your vessel sailing away, do you think that what remains of me here will be capable of anything except to regret my vanished happiness?"

"So you are no longer the strong man whom I have admired? Must those words which I have cherished in my memory be forgotten as an empty and meaningless phrase: 'When you have gone away I shall be as a man who has lived to a very old age and regrets his youth, but did not expect to keep it for ever!?' Come now, Pierre, make the promise which I exact. Give me the proud satisfaction of having made of you the saviour of your people!"

"On my love, receive my vow, which has

been dictated by you," swore Duc Rollon's grandson. "Now you will go away contented, won't you? But how will you know if I have been able to live?"

"I shall know it," she said. "In exchange for the promise given by you, receive mine: I shall return."

She was astonished to see a sadness instead of the joy she expected.

"I believe you," he declared; "you will come back. But when, and how? Accompanied by a husband?"

"No," she promised. "I will return alone and free as I am to-day. . . . Silence! Let us shut close in our souls the memory of this hour!"

CHAPTER XX

As it may be perceived, Aunt Lavinia was on the point of becoming a serious woman. Aboard the yacht her imagination had pictured a rivalry, perhaps a mortal challenge, between Douglas Grant and Warren Islington. Later on, she had been carried away with admiration in watching the newly-awakened love in the young Norman, and had even reproached her niece for her lack of heart. She was possessed now of only one desire—viz., to drag Edith away from a peril which she saw was augmenting from hour to hour. It may be doubted if her perspicacity, which was not of the keenest, would have sufficed for the discovery of a too complete metamorphosis. But, in order to appreciate the progress made, it was only necessary to listen to the girl's conversation. Each day she confided to her aunt the result of a "study" which, by its special bearing, was putting all other subjects in the

background. Ignoring the need of, even scorning, dissimulation, this young person evinced the growing warmth of an interest which could no longer be ascribed to psychological curiosity.

If, by this time, her aunt commenced to blame her for having encouraged Pierre at the risk of ruining his life, she no longer contented herself by replying: "I admit that his heart is nobler than mine." She simply replied nothing and remained silent, which in Miss Corneli's estimation was the most disquieting sign.

During the evening of the day when the question of their return to Washington had been discussed, the two women, left alone, reverted to the subject. No need to say that it was not Edith who broached it. In order to explain her reluctance to the idea of their departure, she once more narrated the scene witnessed in Father Alexis's garden. But she added a detail which had not been disclosed to the company at meal-time—to wit, the solemn promise elicited from Pierre.

"You make him do just as you wish. It is a foregone conclusion. But I wonder if my poor sister brought you into the world for the

special purpose of preventing the Saboteurs from being hanged?"

"Oh! for what purpose did she bring me into the world? To make speeches in the Tribune before men, who, in spite of public laws, deem my presence among them as ridiculous, and vote against me to please the Government? I am ashamed when I fathom what I supposed to be my devotion to 'the Great Cause of Humanity.' It is here that I could promote it; at home it is profmoting itself."

"Then all that remains for us to learn is, that the *Terrapine* will leave without you, and that you are engaged to Pierre de Mondeville."

"I shall go away with you, and I am not engaged."

"That is for the present, but for the future?"

"The future, auntie? It is very simple: I shall live single, and follow your example . . . unless a miracle should take place."

"What do you mean? That you love this young man and that you would leave us for him?"

"What is love? It would be the proper moment for you to sing your romance. Bear in mind that a few weeks ago I was almost decided never to marry. So, should I die an

old maid, Pierre, who, moreover, is in ignorance of my sentiments, would not be responsible. That is for point number one."

"Yes, but for point number two? Would you be foolish enough to marry Pierre?"

"Returned to the committee for further examination, as we say in the House. First of all Duc Rollon and his successor, together with Normandy, must be rescued from the clutches of the Canadians. This is my immediate object." •

On that Edith withdrew, leaving Miss Cornell somewhat relieved. It was much to know that politics still held a place in her niece's mind. The latter showed her secret thought the next morning at breakfast, when Warren Islington repeated the argument brought forward the evening before:

"It would be more honourable to start on our return voyage, before we are requested to show our heels."

"I am less modest," declared Edith. "Certainly, we must depart . . . after having wished the Reverend Galerneau God-speed."

"It is idiotic to try to struggle against the power of priests, especially when these priests are clever monks!"

"Some women are not idiots," protested Edith.

In accordance with his habit, Henry Wagstaff took the defence of his daughter by invoking History :

"Women more than monks have made Renaissance, my young friend."

"Perhaps, but it is the monks who silenced Galileo."

Without giving the time for a discussion to be opened, Edith Wagstaff, having a scheme all prepared, surprised everybody by this question :

"Would it be possible for me to talk *tête-à-tête* for half an hour with Le Moussu ?"

"We expect to fish for trout together this afternoon," announced Islington, mentioning the place. "Our intimacy has become really —astonishing."

"Very good. Should I fall across you both by the most extraordinary luck, give me a chance for a private conversation with that candid (?) and half-witted young man. In the meantime be sure and talk *too much*, and give him to understand that we are recalled to Washington."

"You shall be obeyed; but I hope that

you will have a surer escort than 'extraordinary luck' to protect you against the Saboteurs."

"Don't worry," replied the fair diplomate, with a delicate blush.

Some trout were spread out on the grass when Edith, accompanied by Pierre de Monderville, appeared. He had been duly coached. The exclamations of surprise can easily be imagined. Le Moussu, formally introduced, did not need a rehearsal of his rôle to show that the nephew of a missionary has eyes in his head like any other man, especially after being secluded in a monastery for several days.

"Thus far," said Warren, "I thought I could whip a fly tolerably well, but I have found my master, and I am trying to profit by his lessons."

"It is the favourite Canadian sport," answered Le Moussu, modestly.

"Let me see," said the Columbian girl.

She held herself rigidly, as though petrified with admiration, while Le Moussu "whipped" the stream with real skill. Warren Islington found it preferable to go on ahead, whilst chatting with Pierre.

After a few minutes, the Canadian angler

came to the conclusion that a pretty and smart woman was less common than trout in the surroundings of the Abbey. He declared that he was tired, and began to talk.

"A curious country!" he said.

"Most sadly curious," was the answer. "No doubt you find it extraordinary to see some women venturesome enough to visit it?"

"Oh, Columbian ladies are noted for their courage. But you are leaving, so your learned compatriot tells me."

"Yes, we are returning to America, much saddened by what we have seen, still more so because of our powerlessness to do some good to these poor people. I hear that Duc Rollon turns a deaf ear even to the advice of the venerable occupants of the Abbey. What deplorable obduracy! As for myself, I go away with a hope: it is, that your eminent uncle will end by convincing that respectable old man of the help he might find at your hands; for, after all, are you not the natural protectors of his race?"

"Oh!" said Le Moussu, scratching his nose, "if the Normans are looking for protection, it is evident that they could not do better than by applying to Canada."

Edith glanced at her interlocutor with a marked satisfaction.

“I see,” she said, “that we can depart free from anxiety. But, of course, I do not ask for your confidence, although you seem to me to know a thing or two.”

“Oh dear, no !” replied Le Moussu humbly. “I have not, like you, a Premier for my uncle ; moreover, I would not be much the better for it. The good priest, whose nephew I am, could tell you that he had no end of trouble in teaching me how to serve his Mass.”

“Is it possible ? It is a pity that you know nothing about politics ; I am fond of the subject. Were your uncle here, I should permit myself to give him a piece of advice which he might find useful.”

“If it were not too complicated, perhaps I may be able to communicate it to him,” suggested Le Moussu.

“If I had something to propose, it would not be Duc Rollon I should approach, but his grandson,” continued Edith.

“Pierre de Mondeville is a good and courageous boy, but his grandfather does not take him seriously yet.”

“His grandfather is persuaded that he will

live for ever, in which he is mistaken. I maintain that in an important question the future heir would be able to influence him after first being convinced himself. Enough of it, however, since my idea does not meet with your approbation. As for myself, I shall not be here to assist at the developments. At least I shall have had the pleasure of making your acquaintance before going away."

Le Moussu seemed to seek vainly for a reply to this polite phrase. His sanctimonious smile showed that he was just good enough to serve Mass. Nevertheless, when Edith was alone with Pierre, and they were on the road to the old château, she broached a subject which, perhaps, was not the one her companion was expecting with impatience.

"Listen to me," she said. "Most probably the time has come for you to begin your work as the chief of your people. Sooner or later your country, so rich even in its misery, was bound to attract the eyes of the New World. Such a fine prize is sure to be coveted. You have the proof of it: the Columbians' yacht and the Reverend Galerneau's aeroplane have landed on your coast almost the same day."

The Norman raised his eyes, full of anxiety,

towards the dear face which he had never seen so serious before. Edith continued speaking, however, in a terse and guarded manner, as she would have done in the Tribune :

“ You trust me, don't you ? I blame your grandfather for some of his ideas. I admire him for his staunch patriotism. Notwithstanding his age he would face death in repulsing a foreign invasion.”

“ So would I, even if——”

He stopped and hesitated. Edith Wagstaff interpreted his reticence and finished the phrase :

“ Even if it were a question of fighting the Columbians ? I approve of you. What can I say more ? I might say—— But it is too soon. • The misfortune of such a conflict is not to be feared. All of us here would do everything to prevent it, since to act otherwise would be a hateful treachery.”

She extended her hand to Pierre, who, without speaking, grasped it firmly, as he would have done that of a man.

“ At the Abbey,” she continued, “ you welcome a visitor of whom I will say nothing, except that he keeps himself in a suspicious shadow. Are you credulous enough to believe

that Le Moussu has made such a voyage with the sole intention of serving his uncle's Mass? Moreover, if you do indulge in such an error, it will soon be dissipated."

"By whom?"

"By the young man himself. Just now he let out a word which was full of meaning. The Canadians will offer to be your *protectors*. And if my adroitness has not been in vain, it is to you that the overtures will be made, because they believe you to be more approachable than your grandfather. Then you will understand why the Reverend Galerneau has come to Normandy. My only object in this long speech is to open your eyes; weigh well the conditions of the bargain of which you will soon be enlightened."

"Needless to say that you will be the first to be informed——"

"No. It is to Duc Rollon that you must report without losing one minute. Tell him first of all the propositions made, and await his decision. Another important item: I announced our immediate departure; don't contradict it."

"I have admired your beauty; there is something which I admire still more—your

wisdom. To have you as a Sovereign would be the salvation of a great Empire. What will become of me when you are no longer here to guide me ?”

“ Perhaps I shall be of use to you in my own country. I am your ally, but without bargains or terms. Do as much good as possible around you : it is my only condition, and you have promised it, Pierre dear. Remember, as I shall remember !”

CHAPTER XXI

WHEN the Reverend Galerneau had spoken to the Abbot of the full power bestowed by the Canadian Government, he had not exaggerated the true facts. On returning to the monastery, Le Moussu took his trout to the kitchen, then sought his "uncle," who did not expect so soon an important progress in negotiations. Judging by the nephew's talk, an eavesdropper would have declared that this simple-minded and candid (?) young man was gifted with some intelligence after all.

"The Columbians are leaving," he began. "I have it from the best source."

"You have seen Douglas Grant, then?"

"Douglas Grant is not the best source. The real chief of their expedition now is the young girl whom Pierre de Monderville is following like a dog. Between ourselves I think the fair one is commencing to have enough of his admiration, as well as of the Hostelry where

luxury and amusement have nothing 'fascinating' in them, as they say in Washington. The young girl has paid me the honour of advising me, or rather you through me. She came very near sending a *written* message for fear that I might get muddled: *Beati pauperes spiritu!*"

"To the point," said the missionary.

"I am coming to it, as I deem the time ripe to act on our own hook. Thus far we have relied on the Abbot, but he is dilly-dallying with us either because he is afraid of the old pirate, or because he is waiting to see Wagstaff's hand. Now, do you know what the petticoat deputy advises? To approach the presumptive heir."

"Because, perhaps, she has coached him and managed to turn him against us."

"That was my first idea. However, if she takes an interest in him, which in my opinion she does, she cannot but realize that, after the withdrawal of Columbia, we are his only hope. Now, before going farther, we must discover this young fellow's disposition towards us. That will take me five minutes if I can get hold of him privately."

"I agree with you. But, since our friends

are moving off, why not wait until they have embarked ?”

“ Because their presence is a bugbear which it is easy to shake in front of the eyes of a diplomat so inexperienced — as Pierre de Mondeville.”

“ My friend,” said the Reverend Galerneau, “ follow your inspiration. You are the responsible man towards our Government, which has intrusted you with its confidence. As for myself, I have done my best to help you as much as possible without infringing on the duties of a righteous priest. You may believe that I am longing for my small house in Quebec. Could I have known that we were going to fall across Benedictines already installed here, I should have thought twice before being allured by Elzear Turcote.”

Le Moussu left his chair and made a deep obeisance, wearing a smile which, but for the sanctity of the individual, would have been called Mephistophelian ; then he retired with these words :

“ Your Lordship will forget his fatigue after he has left his small house for an episcopal palace.”

The “ lucky accident ” of his meeting with

Pierre de Mondeville happened that very day.

A Norman forewarned is forearmed. As Le Moussu had predicted, a few minutes were enough to show him the disposition of the presumptive heir, who, of course, repeated that the Columbians were about to leave.

Finding the coast clear, Le Moussu gave a new edition of statements which the Reverend Galerneau had been the first to hear. He extolled the cleverness with which Duc Rollon had scented out the plot of the Emperor Theodore, who was working to take away Normandy's independence.

"But," he continued, "nothing proves that these suspected visitors do not intend to come back, and it is this return which we must prevent."

Pierre was cherishing in his mind a dear promise made; he meditated a few minutes before replying:

"Perhaps they will return now they know the way."

"If such is your wish, the way may be barred. The Canadians look upon the Normans as their ancestors; they consider it their duty to protect them should you claim their help."

On seeing Edith Wagstaff's predictions so quickly fulfilled, Pierre was lost in admiration and did not speak. Mistaking the cause of this silence, the emissary of Elzear Turcote continued :

"I anticipate the objection which you are going to make. What will Duc Rollon say ? But, my friend, Duc Rollon is attaining the limits of human existence. It is doubtful if he will still be living when the danger takes a form. So it is you who will have to face it. It is you who must be armed, or rather protected. Guaranteed by us no attempt can be made to annoy you."

Pierre not understanding very well the signification of the word "guarantee," Le Moussu gave him some enlightenment, taking much trouble to put himself on a level with a negotiator so poorly adapted for this office.

"Probably you are not aware," said he, "that nowadays a military assistance is out of the question. It would be an infringement of our treaty with Columbia. But nothing can prevent us from sending you . . . say, one hundred colonists from Canada. Those, of course, would have a monopoly, shutting the door against all new-comers whoever they

might be. Receiving your hospitality, our people would in return provide you with so many things you are in need of. Arms to begin with. Your country would be transformed, organized, and Duc Rollon's successor would be a real Duc of Normandy, acknowledged as such by a great Power. The acknowledgment by the way would be immediate. You would assume the ducal title on the deed, secret *pro tem.* submitted to your signature." •

"But who would sign with me?" asked Pierre.

"Most noble Seigneur, your signature alone is missing," replied Le Moussu with the smile of a courtier.

He looked at Pierre, whose face was beaming with satisfaction: "Edith would compliment her pupil!" "The boy is pleased with his toy," thought the Canadian.

The hour had come. He drew out a paper from his pocket. Nothing in fact was missing on it, not even the signature of the Prime Minister of Quebec. Pierre seemed astonished on seeing it, and, in fact, it was the first time that a State Seal had been put under his eyes. His astonishment was mistaken for hesitation.

"Why not look to the Abbey for advice," suggested Le Moussu, well aware of the advice the Benedictines would give.

"It is a first-rate idea," said Pierre, putting the paper in his pocket. However, it was not to the monastery that he carried it . . .

Duc Rollon was in a detestable humour when his grandson entered his den. One might have believed that the old man had heard Edith's words: "Sooner or later this country, so rich, even in its misery, is sure to attract the attention of the New World." Or rather it was an accomplished fact. At that very moment the poor man was reproaching himself for having complied with Elizabeth's request. What a mistake it had been to open his door to the Columbians! But, had it been shut, the road to La Brèche was nevertheless known. Why did these uninvited guests protract their visit? What were they looking for in these rambles which seemed like reconnoitring expeditions on the enemy's ground? In what way could the Reverend Galerneau explain the length of his stay at the Abbey? It was quite easy for him to see that he was not needed there, still less his simpleton of a nephew. But, worse than all, other enemies,

more implacable, were in view—old age and death! Compared with that ominous advance what was the invasion of greedy foreigners!

“For myself,” thought Duc Rollon, “the end will be peaceful perhaps. But, after I am gone, what a stormy future is awaiting these poor people who, for fifty years, have lived and died quietly under my eyes! What changes will be their fate, or what will be the ambition of my grandson who, unlike me, has not learned how to fight external and domestic foes? What will my Pierre be? An unconscious puppet, or a defenceless victim in the hands of an ineludable Destiny?”

At the first glance at the young man, Duc Rollon was forcibly struck by a new expression of energy and ability noticeable on his countenance. Beneath the same exterior he was beholding another person.

“What has happened?” asked the old man.

“Nothing has happened as yet,” replied the confident of Le Moussu. “At least, nothing will happen without your consent, since we have been warned of some projects in which we are concerned.”

"What are those projects?"

"To make Normandy a Canadian Colony."

"Who gave you this information?"

"The Canadians themselves. Please read this paper."

One of those violent outbursts of anger which belonged to his nature gradually took possession of the old chief. While he studied line by line the document put under his eyes, his grandson was preserving the most perfect calm, so that his interlocutor mistook his sentiments.

"Duc of Normandy!" thundered the old man, becoming young again in his anger. "Are you a madman whom I must shut up in an asylum, or a traitor whom I must punish? So, then, this is the successor I shall leave after me!"

"Grandfather," pleaded the young man, "if I were what you say I would have signed without telling you. Of course I was expected to do it."

Diverted from the innocent, Duc Rollon's rage fell on the real culprits. Standing upright as an old soldier ready for the fight, he cried out:

"It is I who have lost my mind, who am a

poor idiot in his dotage. Is it possible that I have been such a fool as to shelter these tramps, who have deceived me by their low comedian shamming? Le Moussu wants to send me colonists, does he—‘only one hundred!’ One hundred men full of instruction brought in contact with our people full of ignorance! That would mean a conquest at short notice. And the Columbians turning up with women, dressed in the latest fashion. What are they plotting? When dealing with the Saboteurs, at least we know what they want. We can get rid of them with a rope! . . . Enough! Away with the Reverend Galerneau! Away with the Columbians! To-night if it is possible. The Lord help me, I wonder if I shall not lock the door of the Abbey.”

Pierre listened in silence, quite upset to discover that he had overshot the target. Falling back in his chair almost breathless, the old man trembled with rage, and his grandson feared to see him collapse.

“Grandfather,” said he, “you are not curious to know how this paper was put into my hands, after several days’ hesitation, as you can see?”

He related in detail his conversation with

Le Moussu and the clever tactics of his own diplomacy. A salutary appeasement was produced in Duc Rollon, who regarded his heir with satisfaction.

“On my faith!” said he. “I commence to feel somewhat reassured. I knew that you were strong and courageous, but I could never have believed that you were clever enough to cheat a would-be noodle who has fooled everybody here—those Benedictines, to begin with.”

“It is not I who must be complimented,” declared Pierre. “I only followed the advice of a devoted friend, who respects you and only wishes you good. She it is, in truth, who has scented out this plot, who has shown me the way to baffle it. Must I name her to you? It is Edith Wagstaff.”

Pierre related the services rendered by the new *Egeria*; the effect on the old chief was instantaneous.

“Ah! the dear creature! I must see and thank her. But first let us be rid of these traitors. Send for Father Eustache, who will transmit my orders. Prepare an escort for to-morrow at daybreak; they shall not be lost sight of until they have started for Quebec.

But for the holy unction protecting the Reverend Galerneau. . . . And yet, were he in my presence, I would not trust myself. Be sure to assist at their departure ; then inform this young girl that I am longing to thank her."

CHAPTER XXII

THE Columbians were finishing their evening meal when Pierre de Mondeville knocked at the door of the Hostelry. Warren Islington had just concluded a phrase in which he expressed astonishment that this "trusty follower," as he called him satirically, had not turned up for twenty-four hours. While expressing this surprise he looked at Edith Wagstaff, who showed by a slight smile that the absence of her "trusty follower" had nothing unexpected or unexplained in it.

With more satisfaction than regret, Miss Cornell had added :

"Sooner or later we shall have to do without him."

Poor Aunt Lavinia ! she had rejoiced too soon, for Pierre appeared at this moment. He seemed radiant, and, too excited to even say good-evening to his guests :

"I bring a piece of news : to-morrow at day-break Le Moussu and his uncle will be *en route* for Quebec."

"Is it sure?" asked Douglas Grant, endeavouring to remain calm.

"If you knew my grandfather you would understand that he does not change his mind when once an order has been given."

"The crisis came very suddenly. Who brought it on?"

"I," replied Pierre—"apparently I . . . But listen to the story of my interview with Le Moussu, of which the crisis, as you call it, was the outcome."

He repeated the story which had nearly suffocated with rage the master of La Brèche. Warren Islington, easily given to irony, contemplated him with a stupefaction which had nothing flattering in it. The Norman noticed it and continued :

"Do not mince matters in expressing your thoughts. You deemed me incapable of such cleverness. Le Moussu shared this quite natural opinion, and that was his stumbling-block. As for my grandfather he nearly collapsed. But I have never kept what belonged to some one else, even the honour of

success. Duc Rollon has been told that this honour belongs to Miss Wagstaff."

"There is a loyal young man!" exclaimed the father of the heroine, quite charmed. "It is only a few days ago that I affirmed that on some occasions women had greater power than monks. Tell us of the rôle which my daughter has played."

"She has seen through the character of Le Moussu, who is, in fact, nothing less than the Ambassador of the Canadian Government sent to this country. Then she sketched out point by point the best means of unmasking a man who, by his intelligence, is twenty times my superior. She taught me my lesson; I committed it to memory and repeated it at the proper time, like an obedient pupil. Events developed themselves according to her expectation. Grandfather will come to-morrow to thank her. May a good night's rest calm his supreme agitation. I have nothing more to say, and I apologize for having disturbed you at this unseemly hour. But I was so happy!"

"I am as happy as you," declared Edith.

She had taken Pierre's hand, which she held for several seconds while she seemed to reflect.

"I won't allow Duc Rollon to come to see me," she said, "at the risk of increasing his fatigue. I shall go to see him. Find out, please, what hour would suit him to receive my visit."

Left alone, it may be guessed that the Columbians had no desire to sleep, each from different motives.

"I shall get up early," announced Warren Islington, "and wish *bon voyage* to that hypocrite, Le Moussu."

"I shall send a marconigram to Washington," said Douglas Grant, rubbing his hands. "Dear Miss Wagstaff, was it not a luminous idea, that of bringing you along? Duc Rollon is in your hands. What can he refuse you henceforward?"

"Time will tell," said the young girl with gravity, as she retired, following her aunt, who seemed to be the least happy of the party.

"You ought to be proud of such a daughter," continued Douglas Grant, pressing the hand of Henry Wagstaff. "If ever the Emperor should take a woman in his Ministry—everything is possible in these days—one will see her succeed her uncle."

"I don't favour a woman taking direction

of political affairs," answered the historian. "Once more I feel a regret that my daughter . . . is not a son !"

"It is a pity indeed," approved the two young men with more conviction than courtesy.

The next morning Pierre brought the latest news. The Canadians had departed ; his grandfather was better, and he was expecting Miss Wagstaff.

She was quite ready to go. Her aunt had remarked with what care she had chosen a dark woollen dress, avoiding as much as possible any refinements of a foreign nature.

After the members of the expedition were gathered round the breakfast-table, Miss Cornell had said :

"You want to court Duc Rollon's favour?"

Douglas Grant, siding with the young girl, had answered :

"I imagine the *Terrapine* will weigh anchor with a complete freight of old rails."

Edith quitted the Hostelry, escorted by Pierre. On the Esplanade, crowded as usual, it was impossible for them to talk quietly.

"Must I admit the fact," said the young girl, "that the visit I am about to make fills me with a veritable terror? To give me

courage, let us take a little walk outside of the *château*, on that pretty road leading to the river."

• Her companion did not object, but he asked smilingly :

"Are you afraid that grandfather will deal with you as he did with the Canadians?"

"Who knows?" she replied, with a grave look which astonished Pierre.

He continued, however, in the same tone of pleasantry :

"I should certainly be afraid, were I in your place, lest I might be detained here against my will. You have showed yourself necessary. . . ." Then he added, with quite a different expression on his face: "Alas! you *are* necessary. Without you I am nothing. I can do nothing, and grandfather is convinced of it. He will express to you his gratitude and admiration."

"I do not doubt it. However; it were better that you do not confess to him that you love me. He would send me away, and you know it."

"If by confessing my love I should only risk my life, a drawn sword could not deter me. But I feel a coward at the idea of shortening your presence here by one day."

"How you love me!" she sighed, bending her head.

"Do you regret having given me the permission to love you?"

"No; I am proud and happy to have experienced what a man's love can be. If, to learn it, it had been necessary to cross the ocean twenty times, I should not deem it too long a journey."

"To forget me, it will be enough to cross it once."

"One does not forget such memories. Must I repeat my promise?"

He kissed Edith's hand and pressed it in his. They walked slowly without speaking. The shadow of a natural wall soon afforded them a delicious coolness. A loosened rock served as a bench, on which they sat, side by side. Their ears caught the purling music of the stream as though it were saying, "The orchestra is playing the accompaniment: now it is your turn to sing." The feminine voice was the first to obey:

"When quite a young girl I used to read tales which I thought fantastic. In that fairy-land I met men leaving their country, their family, their career, to follow the women they

loved to the other end of the earth. At such episodes, I must confess, I merely shrugged my shoulders."

• Pierre reflected a minute, then replied :

"It was quite simple."

"Would you do like them?" she asked, her eyes riveted on those of Pierre.

He could not answer at once. His broad breast heaved with a sigh as he looked at the tree-tops. His face wore the stern expression of a man passing through a severe ordeal of physical courage. At last he spoke :

"Who were these men? Sons of Emperors or Kings? If, to go with you, I had only to hand over a crown to another heir, do you think that I should hesitate? . . . No, alas! I must not say go *with* you, because I belong to an inferior world, but I might ask for a place in your crew. When in Columbia you could provide me with better clothes. Then, perhaps, after a time, your father's servants would not laugh at their new comrade—poor, ignorant, brought back as a sample of an extinct race. But I am, at the same time, less than a man of your lower class, and more than a King's son, considering my task : so you have yourself declared."

It might be supposed that Edith had not heard these last words, for she continued :

“ Were you to come to my country, in a few weeks you would be the man most sought-after in our capital. The Emperor would wish to see you, he would give you a place in Court with honours and a title.

“ Duc of Normandy, as the Canadians offered me.”

“ The most beautiful girls would pursue the famous Pierre de Mondeville with their attentions. You would only have to choose among them all.”

“ Among them all . . . except one,” he said, acknowledging by a sad smile this play of imagination.

Edith did not smile. A sudden look of solemnity marked her countenance. After a moment's silence :

“ Among *all*,” she repeated in a deep voice.

Pierre almost yielded to a wild impulse of passion. But his arms, half opened, fell to his side.

“ Why,” he asked, “ are you torturing me with such a temptation ? At your side, in your country, picturing to myself grandfather's last hours and the moral agony of my people

left to die in my absence, how could I be happy and make you happy?"

"Father Eustache would replace you. I have seen his work. He accomplishes miracles.

"After my departure, Father Eustache would not prevent the Canadians from returning, they or some others. From his grave Duc Rollon would send us his malediction."

"We must not deserve his malediction. But what will you do when he has left this world?"

"I will do my duty. Only a prophet could say what this duty will be. Darkness will close around us once more, for some time or for ever. After me, who will assume the heaviest task which has ever been laid on a man's shoulders?"

"Your . . . successors."

"Where will they come from? You would not dare, without laughing, to advise me to select a helpmate among the poor creatures whom we meet in our rambles."

"No, Pierre, I will not give you this advice. But the time is passing and your grandfather expects me. Take me to him, and see that your sister Elizabeth is present at the meeting.

You will leave us alone. I, too, will try to perform my duty, not much easier than yours from a certain point of view. Let us go, my friend !” .

CHAPTER XXIII

“LEAVE me now,” said Edith, after they had passed through the door of the old manor. “Hold yourself in readiness. It is possible that your grandfather will send for you, or I may wish to see you to say adieu. The interview may be long or it may last but a few minutes. Here am I trembling again. Where is Elizabeth?”

“Probably in the chapel, it is usually her hour there. Shall I inquire?”

“No, I will go myself, for never since I was born have I had so much need of prayer. The time has come when miracles are needed for us.”

She directed her steps towards the oratory, which had an entrance from the Esplanade. It was the place where the seigneurs of former days performed their sacred duties. Up to the springing arches Gothic architecture was

discernible in the pillars and capitals. But at the time of the fire the upper part had tumbled down, and coarse planks had replaced the ribs of the ogives. Every vestige of sacred furniture and decoration had disappeared. A rustic altar with its tabernacle, surmounted by a crucifix saved from the disaster, were ready for the celebration of the Holy Mysteries. Facing a cheap coloured print, supposed to be a picture of the Virgin, was an old French flag, torn and gloriously stained, bespeaking the gallantry of the last defenders of the country. But no cathedral, with the splendour of its stained-glass windows and its golden lamps, had ever sheltered a more fervent worshipper than the humble Christian maiden bent in prayer in that poor shrine. Noiselessly her friend knelt beside her, and touched her lightly on the shoulder.

“Pray for me,” said Edith; “pray as if I were in danger of death.”

At these words Elizabeth turned a face quite upset towards her friend, who continued very calmly :

“Let us pray together, and then you will come with me, for I need your support.”

The two young girls united in an ardent

and mute invocation, after which, making the sign of the cross, they quitted the chapel by an inner door.

"Kiss me," said Edith, "I have your affection, have I not?"

Her eyes full of sincerity, Elizabeth replied:

"From the first moment I have loved you like a sister. But, great heavens, what has happened?"

"You will know soon. My entire life will be decided in a few moments. Consequently, do not be astonished to see me trembling."

The Norman maiden gave her friend a look, in which could be read the supreme peace of one who is no longer looking for her happiness in this world.

"My entire life has already been decided," she replied, "but I required more than a few instants to renounce the world, even *our* world, as unattractive as it may be."

"It will be, however, easier to abandon. . . . But your grandfather is waiting for me—please come with me, *dear sister*."

Notified by Pierre of the expected visit, Duc Rollon was wondering at the delay. Seeing Edith appear, he advanced towards her with open arms.

"Permit an old man to salute the benefactor of his people."

But Edith gently shrank from the paternal caress.

"Presently," she said, "if you still wish to kiss me, you will make me the happiest of women."

"Very well; let us settle our accounts first. Alas! I owe you so much and can give you nothing. What do you lack? Happy creature, you have received so many gifts from God! It is by dint of your splendid intelligence that you have saved my last days from a supreme downfall."

"Are you not somewhat unjust to your grandson?"

"Pierre is my only joy. Courage, love of his country, contempt of death: I have handed down to him these traditions of old France. But, I have just seen that an intrepid heart and a strong arm are not sufficient to protect us against deceitful plots. You did it yesterday. . . ."

"I would do it again to-morrow. Your fears are mine. However, fear is not all. When talking with Pierre during the last days we have talked mostly of hope."

“What hope? The advent of a master coming from the Occident, or the cursed seed ready to spring forth anew, the destructive spark fermenting new conflagration?”

“Duc Rollon, be sure that you will have to choose between them unless you are cautious. Now you are living in the night which affords a welcome rest after defeat. But who can prevent the sunrise of the morrow, with its new duties?”

“Our night has been long—and so calm! Perhaps the sun will forget us. Young girl, why did you come?”

“I believed that I came, led by a child’s whim. But unknown voices have spoken to me since my feet have trod your generous land. Duc Rollon, I know now! I came to tell you: France is not dead. It must resume its place amongst the great nations of Europe, which will be rejuvenated by your noble country. You will be honoured always for having commenced the work in this small bit of France, where a moment ago I saw that you have preserved your God and your flag.”

Unable to restrain her feelings, Elizabeth kissed Edith. As for the old man, his hands resting on his arm-chair, his body bent forward, he contemplated this young heroine, sprung

up all of a sudden, and his mouth trembled with emotion.

"On my word," said he, "you make me think of our Joan of Arc. Do you know her history?"

"I know it, and may Heaven keep me from accepting for myself the comparison, nor comparing you with the King without energy whom she came to rescue."

"A poor energy I have. I am over eighty years old."

"Your successor is full of strength."

"Has he an army, a general, a people? And you, daughter of a remote land, will you stay to fight by his side until death?"

Edith rose and, bowing her head, she said in a very gentle voice:

"That is my wish, my dearest wish."

Duc Rollon heard the words, but did not take in their real meaning. For some minutes the conversation had taken such a turn as to suggest a metaphor springing from enthusiasm. He tried to revert to a more practical ground:

"Dear child, Joan of Arc was French."

"French I may be: that depends upon you!"
Feeling that she could not say any more,

Edith looked at Elizabeth, who understood the silent appeal. She approached her grandfather in order that he might hear the words which she almost whispered in his ear :

“ Pierre loves Edith Wagstaff.”

This revelation brought on a sudden and complete change. The old man left his chair as if wishing to avoid contact with Edith. At one moment it looked as though he would pronounce his curse on the foreign girl whom he had just profusely blessed. Shaking his hands which he raised above his head, he exclaimed :

“ Oh yes, I am a miserable, doting idiot ! Is it possible that I could have forgotten that youth and foolishness are walking hand in hand ? I have known it at a time, however !”

The two young girls, mute with terror, were clasped in each other's arms, as though to face a storm together. But despair had succeeded to anger in the old chief's soul.

“ What will become of us now ? Poor Pierre, my hope and my support ! Here is he doomed to suffer all his life, perhaps !”

“ And I ?” sighed Edith for all reply.

Better than a long discourse, her broken-hearted face, her eyes swimming with tears,

displayed her heart's secret. Duc Rollon could not fail to read it. But he was too absorbed in his own chagrin to think of that of this stranger.

"You?" he replied. "Shall I pity you also, pretty tourist attracted by a new object encountered on your way? What can he be to you, this young man, dressed like one of your beggars, ignorant as one of your shepherds? Don't desecrate the sublime word of love, which you are not capable of understanding."

"I do understand it since I have seen Pierre. No human being can equal him."

These words, instead of mollifying the old man, only increased his exasperation. He growled with sneering mockery:

"Well, since you love him and he loves you, take him with you. I give him to you;

Humble for herself, proud for the master of her heart, Edith uttered these words, raising her head:

"I have offered to take him. He refused, because his duty keeps him near you and near his people.

"And if he had accepted?"

"He would have lost all my esteem."

Duc Rollon approached Edith and, placing

his hands on her shoulders, seemed to study her as an unknown specimen of humanity.

"Have pity on me," said he, "my mind is not very strong at this moment. How could I believe such things?"

Again Elizabeth's sweet and deep voice was heard.

"Grandfather, did you know them both as I know them, these things would seem quite natural to you."

The grandsire, disarmed, turned towards Edith :

"Mademoiselle, I beseech you to forgive me and to listen to this prayer: go away as quickly as possible. It is the greatest proof of affection that an ill-fated boy, doomed to unhappiness, can receive at your hands."

"No," replied the valiant sweetheart, "he can receive a stronger one."

"What do you mean?"

"I only await your permission, and that of my father, to share his duties here and become his wife."

"Never, as long as I live!"

"Then he and I will live and die in solitude, away from each other. The word which I have just heard will sever us for this life. I

take my oath: Duc Rollon, you can descend to your grave in peace. Your grandson is not the man who will wait to disobey until the moment when death has closed your eyes."

"Do not take the trouble to reassure me. I know my blood. Besides, however hard his trial may be, I smile when comparing it with the misfortunes I have experienced. Pierre will follow his destiny as I have followed mine. What could you bring him? Silk for his dress, delicacies for his table, wine which inebriates, Science which poisons, destroys and kills? Go, young girl. In this country nothing remains to destroy, and very little to kill."

"Very little, alas! But there remains much to rebuild both in a physical and intellectual order. That which you will not allow me to accomplish by love, some others may achieve by strength. This morning you have cleared your house of an invader. I will take the same route. But some travellers less docile will visit you, and I will no longer be here to close your door against them. Listen to my prediction: one day you will regret having allowed me to go away."

"I have been told that you were eloquent!" sighed the old man.

"Never more will I use the same eloquence. I have pleaded for my love and for my life—and I have lost my cause!"

She made ready to leave. Elizabeth detained her by her dress, unable to speak because of her suppressed sobs. The old chief fell on a chair with his head in his hands.

"Don't you see?" he said after a moment's silence. "Don't you see that one day you would curse me if I permitted you to perpetrate an act of generous folly? Your country would be unanimous in condemning it."

"My country would be that of Pierre."

Again Duc Rollon fell to meditating. Then Elizabeth received this order:

"Go, fetch your brother."

The young man entered almost immediately.

"Kneel before this young woman," ordered his grandsire.

Pierre fancied that the Le Moussu affair was still holding the floor, so, smilingly, he obeyed, thinking as he did so: "the command comes a little late."

"Do you know what she has just done?" asked Duc Rollon.

"I know better than anyone, I have just seen the Canadians off."

"Who is thinking of them? My boy, this girl of the most beautiful country in the world, since France no longer exists, is ready to share your misery and to become your wife!"

"I know so well the goodness of her heart, not even that astonishes me," sighed Pierre, although he was overpowered with surprise.

Still kneeling, he pressed his hand over his eyes for a moment; then he rose and uttered these words, pronounced in a vibrating voice:

"But there are some sacrifices which a man must refuse."

"That is what I have been doing for an hour," said the old man. "I admit that she has almost vanquished me. As for yourself, don't lose your head. The last word remains in suspense. Miss Wagstaff has not consulted her father. If he consents, then there is nothing impossible in this world."

"No, nothing impossible before faith and love," affirmed the young Columbian girl. "Let me take my leave. It is the hour of the last battle, but not the heaviest, except for my filial tenderness!"

"Yet another word," interrupted Duc

Rollon. "Whatever may happen, the test of time is necessary. So, dear child, go back to your country and meditate on such a strange determination. Let us separate and await the sequence of events, according to God's will."

"Now we can kiss each other," said Edith, offering her cheek to the old chief.

She took her departure, leaving the grandfather between his two grandchildren, who, alarmed by his paleness, forgot all else in surrounding him with their loving care.

CHAPTER XXIV

AN observant reader has already inferred that Henry Wagstaff was by no means an ordinary man. Drawn away from his epoch, so to speak, by an absorbing study which had been the mastering passion of his existence, he had always lived in close contact with the most surprising vicissitudes of the universal History. With a clear insight he had comprehended the succession of glorious uprisings and lamentable downfalls which had marked the trail of the different peoples from their birth to their death.

He had always marvelled at the rôle played sometimes by a man, sometimes by a woman, who, by his or her wonderful genius, sublime abnegation, or even by inconceivable mistakes, had obtained results which no human wisdom could have foreseen.

Ignoring ambition for himself, he had felt some disquietude at first, when his daughter

had engaged in a career hitherto closed to feminine employment; but since he had been able to fathom the extent of her rare intelligence, he no longer made objections. In fact, the present calm and prosperity of the Columbian Empire did not promise any special occasion for a rôle to his dear politician, as he was wont to call her. Without any regrets he believed that Edith, put on a stage of greater activity, would have been a wonder for many people.

Since he had quitted Columbia, where there were no deficiencies, for a country in which all had to be remade, the meditations of his deep mind had wandered much farther than Henry Wagstaff had chosen to show in his conversation. A few days had sufficed to make him understand what a part the genius of a woman might play at La Brèche, with results not only of pregnant interest for the present, but perhaps of historical magnitude for the future.

To believe that he desired such a task for Edith would be an injustice to his tender affection for his daughter. But she did not meet with the expected rebuff when, still trembling with emotion caused by her colloquy with Duc Rollon, she sought her father's

presence. The intensity of the shock was lessened by the previous meditations of Henry Wagstaff. It was a philosopher who listened in silence to the girl's declaration, while the father felt in his heart an anguish only too easy to understand. When his daughter related that she had been compared to Joan of Arc, he had a sad smile.

"Poor Duc Rollon!" he said, with a sigh; "what could Joan of Arc do having to face mere nothingness? If one wished to compare, it is a Catherine of Russia, with a moral sense, which this country claims at the present hour. To me such a conviction is causing a terror which supersedes every other feeling. I wonder if you have measured the task which would be yours."

"Do you know Pierre?" asked the young girl, with the pride of a loving woman.

"I know only one thing about him which is easy to see: he looks on you as an omnipotent and infallible being. But your responsibility would be all the more overwhelming. Before all else, you would have to educate a boy."

Edith could not find a reply. It was not on this ground that she expected to fight. Instead of appealing to her heart, her father

had appealed to her reason. But the expected attack was about to take place. Little by little on the old man's face the fire caused by the discussion had disappeared, to be replaced by a shadow of grief, and this lamentation escaped from poor Henry Wagstaff's lips :

“ We are but the blind puppets of Fate. One evening, while talking with friends, someone spoke of old iron which might be rejuvenated ; and these words thrown at random in a conversation may perhaps cost me my daughter.”

Edith clasped him around the neck. It was a long and silent embrace, but soon the prudent father recovered speech :

“ Mind, I have said *perhaps*. If ever a matrimonial project required time for reflection . . . ! First of all we will return to Columbia, little girl.”

Edith sighed.

“ That is the grandfather's will. It must be admitted that the project causes him, as well as you, more apprehension than enthusiasm.”

“ I should be greatly astonished were it otherwise. At all events, I suppose he understands that he must come and ask your hand for his grandson. Then we will take our de-

parture, leaving the answer in suspense. With the exception of your aunt, no one will know of the secret which we will carry with us. Poor Lavinia! What a shock for her!"

But, on this side also, if the consternation was great, the surprise was limited. Miss Cornell's only reply was a deluge of tears. Her brother-in-law, to console her, announced:

"We will take her back with us. The last word has not yet been said."

She made this reply, which would have satisfied Corneille:

"Ah! I have seen their eyes when they look at each other!"

"Edith herself acknowledges that there are great obstacles."

"Obstacles? Poor man! Chimène married Rodrigue, and he had made her an orphan. Pierre has not killed you, as far as I can see."

Her tears continued to flow. It was the first time that Aunt Lavinia was not equal to attending the midday meal.

For almost one hour Douglas Grant and Warren Islington had waited in the dining-room, wondering at such an unwonted lack of punctuality. Henry Wagstaff took this oppor-

tunity of advising their departure, which formerly he had opposed.

“My sister’s health causes me some anxiety,” he declared, “and it would be cruel as well as useless to prolong our sojourn.”

Without betraying their thoughts, the two young men kept their doubts as to the true reason. On Edith’s face there was no sign of uneasiness felt for a sick person, who, moreover, was in perfect health an hour ago. Duc Rollon, much agitated, appeared almost immediately after the meal. Edith vanished to nurse her aunt; Douglas and Warren, without being hindered, went out on the Esplanade to smoke their pipes. Their conversation can be summed up by this phrase of the explorer :

“No : do not be in a hurry to dub this trip a failure. The truth will come out some day. It is possible that we have done much greater things for our country than we imagine. Once in my life I talked too much ; this time we will keep our mouths shut, won’t we, my *fidus Achutes* ?”

“There are some things that one does not need to suggest to a gentleman,” replied Warren Islington.

In the meanwhile, alone with Henry Wagstaff, Duc Rollon opened the dialogue :

“Has your daughter spoken to you?”

Edith's father understood at once that the shorter the conversation, the better. He said :

“I know our children's desire. But we are no longer children, you and I. For both of us the mere idea of this marriage is distressing. You, by your wisdom, so I am told, exact time for its maturity. It is a precaution that I should have insisted upon myself. So we will separate, for some months, or for ever, as God wills.”

“You did not give your daughter a peremptory refusal?” asked Pierre's progenitor, betraying his secret hope.

“I consider that I have not the right to do so, for the reason that my daughter is endowed with the necessary qualities to make her instrumental in your regeneration.”

“Regeneration! There again I hear that word which makes me shiver!”

“I understand your misgivings. Being acquainted with your recent history, I am not surprised. Reassure yourself on this point. Your successor must start at a slow and prudent pace. If a shattered house is repaired

too quickly it will tumble down, as Turkey did ninety years ago. Should it be my daughter's destiny to lend her aid in such a difficult work, she will be prepared for it by my counsel. Need I add that she will bring some stones for the rebuilding of the glory of old France. Unlike the Canadians, she will come to you without a treaty, but, instead, she will bring an Imperial promise removing all worry regarding your independence. Do not forget that Edith's uncle is at the head of our Government."

Duc Rollon extended his hand to his interlocutor.

"I do not know the uncle, but I do know the father. There only remains for you to make some arrangement to inform me of your definite decision."

"I have thought of it. The ocean, and it is my consolation, can be traversed in three days. Douglas Grant will make the trip, a simple promenade for him. He will tell you of our decision, and will learn yours. In the meanwhile, I pledge myself to secrecy, with the exception of my sister."

"I give the same pledge, except for Elizabeth. When do you want to leave?"

"To-morrow, if it pleases you. Certain

situations must not be prolonged. Whatever may happen, if I have the time to add one volume to many others, the Duc Rollon of the Tenth Century and that of the Twenty-first will live side by side in History. The first one made Normandy; the second one will have contributed to remaking France!"

Such was the adieu, or rather the *au revoir*, of these two men, so well made to understand each other.

During this colloquy, Douglas Grant and Warren Islington continued to exchange their impressions, so widely different from the enthusiastic hopes which had filled their souls at the moment of their departure from Columbia.

"In conclusion, I have one great favour to beg of you," said the young scientist; "it is, don't ask me to go with you when you give an account of the results of this expedition to His Majesty. By Jove, I want to be left out of the interview!"

"Don't be uneasy, I shall take Henry Wagstaff to replace you. When the Emperor has scolded to his heart's content I intend to leave them together, and I bet you that Theodore is sure to hear some things which will make him much less regret his old iron."

“So be it! Wouldn't you laugh if we showed Elzear Turcote that, under certain circumstances, a young girl can do more than an old Canon for the good name of her country?”

“And for the salvation of another. We shall no longer be living to read the last chapter of this history, but we shall have helped to contribute to the first one.”

• Edith wished that her parting with Pierre might take place in the chapel, awaiting the day when they should be for ever united before this same altar.

They met there that very evening, with no other witness than their sister Elizabeth. The three prayed for a long time. Then she who was going away, taking Duc Rollon's grandson by the hand, stepped toward the chancel.

“You believe in God?” she asked. “Next to that faith I wish to leave you another.”

“My faith in you is greater than in anything else in the world,” said the young man. “All that you promise is as certain as any human truth.”

• “In presence of dear Elizabeth, before this tabernacle which enshrines His Supreme

Presence, I promise, if it be the will of Heaven, to be yours or none other's."

"*Amen!*" responded Pierre. "I make the same promise. Try to return soon, for I shall need all my strength to wait for you."

"I will work unceasingly that the probation may not be prolonged. Trust me! Every time you enter this chapel, think of me when looking at this flag, which one day will be *our* flag!"

She touched its glorious folds with her lips, then offered her forehead to Pierre to kiss, trying vainly to dispel the look of sadness on her face.

"This," said she smilingly, "is the last kiss of Edith Wagstaff; the next will be given by Edith de Mondeville. Let us part now. Our sister will escort me to the Hostelry."

The young girls, with their arms around each other, walked a few paces in silence.

"With what courage you have accomplished your sacrifice!" Elizabeth finally said.

"Are you not longing with impatience for the moment to make yours?"

"Yes, dear—but what a difference! You will give up everything for a man; I will give

up few things—for, God! Alas! will my desire ever be fulfilled?"

Pretending not to have heard this plaint of the other fiancée, Edith Wagstaff changed the conversation :

"Dear Elizabeth, you must render me a service. When Douglas Grant will come—soon—to say that all has been decided and that I am returning, give him the list of presents which I must bring for the different members of my new family. Ah! what a long list! How should I be able to go through it without you?"

"A big work, indeed; but Pierre will help you."

"I counted on that. So far as you personally are concerned, I already know what I am going to choose."

"And yet that is the most difficult: Neither gold, nor silver, nor precious stones for a future nun."

"Be reassured: I will bring you—two or three good sisters, who will nurse the old people, instruct the children, and receive novices."

"Ah! dear Edith, how truly you are the very woman to save us!"

In each other's arms they mingled their tears of joy, of regret, of tenderness. Then the Columbian girl entered the Hostelry to make preparations for her departure.

The return to the shore was accomplished the next day in a somewhat solemn silence, but without adventure. Pierre's heroic calm—his face wore the shining serenity of the martyr—could not fail to make an impression on Aunt Lavinia. She allowed her niece to see it when she had reached her cabin after the shore had sunk beneath the line of the horizon. Happy, because of this approbation, Edith replied to her aunt :

“Do not forget that you have compared him with the ‘Gid.’ Come, be frank. You would despise me were I to stay in Columbia, wouldn't you?”

“Ah! my dear. It is easy for you to talk! You are not sixty years old, I am not twenty; you are not a poor old aunt who will be left all alone, and—I am not Chimène!”

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